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THUNDER BOY



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THUNDER BOY

BY

OLAF BAKER

Author of "Dusty Star," etc.



THORNTON BUTTERWORTH LIMITED
15 BEDFORD STREET, LONDON, W.C.2

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THUNDER BOY

CHAPTER I

THE WORLD OF THE SUGAR-BOX

THE wood clicked and made subdued noises in the stove, as if it had things to say. But if they were not intelligible to grown-up ears of backwoods folk, the child gurgled back at them in an equally unknown tongue. He did not know that around him for a thousand leagues stood the countless hosts of the trees. He did not guess that, out there, beyond the magic circle of firelight, and voices, lay the dumb horror of the cold ; nor that here, within so small a space, the soul of the gigantic timber-world was spitting itself out to him in spurts of resinous gossip and all sorts of low companionable noises. All he knew was that here, in the empty sugar-box, with the opossum-skin lining, it was delightfully warm, and that while up there in the stove the warmth was making itself a voice, down here in the sugar-box it was making itself a smell.

The world of the sugar-box had three high sides and one low, and was built of pine-boards. What with the smell of the pine, and the smell of the opossum-skin, the heat drew out from it a fine, pungent odour that tickled Thunder Boy's nose. And his nose,

mark you, was just as much a part of his appreciation of the world as his eyes, or his mouth ; because his senses were not yet separated in that tiresome way which comes from getting grown up. So he was blessedly unconscious whether he smelt the warmth, or was warmed by the smell. And as far as his little fat body was concerned, it really didn't matter ; for whichever way it was, it was a very good compact existence down there in the sugar-box, and, beyond the excursions he made to the warmth and food supply he recognized as his mother, his experiences were limited. So there, in a piney and opossum-skin seclusion, crouched the little dark-eyed Thunder Boy, and made himself a world.

Out there, in the bitter cold, every living thing that could take cover, did it, in every possible kind of way. Stoves and sugar-boxes not being available there, the creatures were put to all sorts of shifts, to keep themselves warm. The grouse, for instance, having *kwit-kwitted* himself into a resolute frame of mind, as if he were softly repeating " I must, I must, I must, I must ! " had suddenly left the bough he was sitting on, and plunged head-first into the powdery snow, and then, working his way a little to the side, had made a small bedroom for himself under the spruce tips, where he promptly went to sleep. Each creature, furred or feathered, solved the problem as its wits suggested, in order to keep its life in its body, while all about it, for countless leagues of snow-bound wilderness, the arctic horror froze.

But of all that outer horror of frozen darkness, very little found its way within the magic world of the sugar-box. It is true that the cold began growing more

and more noticeable as you got farther from the stove, but even at the farthest corners of the room it was mild compared with the tremendous iciness of the world outside, where the very moose, with his hairiest overcoat, forgot what it was to be warm.

The glow poured from the stove into the sugar-box with a ruddy-yellow light. As far as Thunder Boy could observe, it obeyed some secret law which worked in connection with his mother. When she opened the door at the side of the stove, the glow increased. When she put in thick pieces of wood, and shut it again, the glow shrank to a twilight glimmer. Only then, inside the stove, conversation went on at a tremendous pace while little heated voices which seemed to have waited in the wood for many winters clicked, hissed and spurted remarks without ever waiting to get replies. Thunder Boy enjoyed these conversations hugely. He clutched the front of the sugar-box with his fat brown hands, lifting the back part of him (also fat) up and down, in a sort of Indian dance. And as he heaved and subsided, he chuckled and gurgled rapturously, answering the resinous voices that gibbered so merrily in the fragrant wood-talk which the grown-up persons had forgotten to understand. And then, as the voices whined into a lower key, and the glow increased, it was a grand experience to watch the twilight do its walking up and down the pitch-pine walls.

And the performance would have gone on for ever, you might have thought, unless the supply of wood gave out, though there was still half a cord of it stacked up behind the door. But all the time the Indian woman was attending to the fire, a thing was taking

place in her head. So long as she didn't neglect his nourishment, or let the fire get low, Thunder Boy had nothing to say against her doing what she liked inside her head. So he gurgled at her with encouraging approval, much in the same way as he encouraged the stove. If he had had any inkling of the crazy idea she was shaping there, he would have yelled lustily with all the force of his lungs ; but as he hadn't the least notion of it, he just humped himself down in the sugar-box, and promptly went to sleep.

He had sunk so deep down in the sleep-world that he was only half conscious that he was being made into a bundle by his mother's practised hands. He remonstrated a little by a drowsy baby moan or two ; but the sleep-world piled its continents so heavily upon him that when the bundling up was finished, he lay without a sound.

When she had finished all her preparations, she placed the bundle in a blanket, slung it over her back, fastened it securely in true Indian fashion, and was ready. It began to be cold in the cabin, for the stove was dying down. But it was nothing to the cold outside, when she opened the door, and peered cautiously out. To leave the shelter of the cabin for that moonlit iciness seemed a rash thing to do, unless some urgent reason made it necessary. The Indian woman took in the scene with a rapid glance which swept the settlement from one side to the other. Dawn would not break for another two hours, and she knew that no one was likely to be astir. The cabins were so absolutely still that it seemed as if sleep were packed upon the eyelids of the pale-faces as firmly as the drifts upon the frozen ground. She closed the cabin door

cautiously behind her, and then, moving as quickly as her snow-shoes allowed, passed across the open space of the clearing till she disappeared from sight among the snow-laden trees.

But in the empty cabin, the stove continued to click softly and make subdued noises, as if nothing had happened. And in the slowly dying glow, the sugar-box gave out a faint odour of vanished opossum-skin and of nameless childish things.

CHAPTER II

THE HUNGER-MOON

WITH the bundle on her back, the Indian mother travelled on at a steady pace. So long as sleep and warmth kept the bundle quiet, she was ready to face the wilderness, with its terrors—Hunger, Darkness, Cold, and Beasts—so that she might escape that greater terror of the pale-faces who desired that the contents of the bundle should grow up into a White Man, and so turn from her in the end. They did not tell her that. Under their pale skins, they hid the White Man's cunning. But—she *knew*!

As she went, she kept casting anxious glances eastward for the coming of the dawn. With daylight, her flight must be discovered, sooner or later. And if they followed her, and caught her, she knew that they would drag her back to the hateful settlement. Better, a thousand times, to sleep in the snow, than that!—to sleep along “the wolf-trail,” and then continue her journey on the moccasins of the Dead.

Ah!—what was that? Something seemed to move back there among the pines. A fox, perhaps, or a lucivee. She looked hard at the spot, but could make out nothing clearly in the confused shadows. However famished a fox might be, she was not afraid of it: but a lucivee with the cold glitter of the Hunger-

moon in its cruel eyes, was another matter. Even the foxes, when snow was soft and travelling bad, went in mortal dread of those tremendous cats.

She quickened her pace a little, with a new sense that she was not the only traveller in the snowy stillness of the great woods. Ah!—there it was again! This time she saw it more clearly. It was larger than either fox or lynx; as large as a full-grown wolf. She had just made sure of this, when it disappeared again.

From that time forward, she knew she was being followed. Sometimes, she only caught a glimpse of a tawny shadow drifting through the trees, lost to view almost as soon as seen; but always—so it seemed to her—a little closer than before.

It was the middle of the morning before the animal allowed itself to be clearly seen. Then it came boldly out into an open glade, and she saw that it was not a wolf, but a large panther, or mountain lion. At first she was frightened. Then she remembered that her mother, the old weather-wise and beast-wise Katoya, had always told her that the panther was the Indian's friend, and would never attack unless first provoked. And Katoya, as the Indian world knew, had a vast acquaintance with the beasts. But then, this was the Hunger-moon, when all the world went thin for want of food. Friendship was truly of the heart; Hunger, still more truly, of the stomach. And the stomach was deeper than the heart. An empty stomach was a fierce emptiness. It respected no law but desire.

As she stood looking anxiously at the animal, the bundle on her back gave a whimper. There also, as she remembered, she carried a little stomach. When empty, the little Thunder Boy's interior could be as

remorseless as the wolves. And in that, apparently, the Hunger-moon did not wait for any calendar, but came and went with remarkable frequency. The panther, hearing the whimper, pricked its pointed ears.

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Thunder Boy's first feeling, when he woke, was the emptiness spoken of. Moreover, the sugar-box had grown decidedly colder, and seemed to have gone out walking. At moments of emptiness or cold, he knew of one excellent thing to do, and always did it. He opened his mouth, and cried.

When he came into daylight out of the opossum-skin twilight, he made an important discovery. The sugar-box wasn't there! But his mother was; also, beyond her, a big animal, bigger and hairier than the stove. Its colour was really a tawny grey, but against the whiteness of the snow, it looked almost yellow, and its eyes were like those of a lynx, green-gleaming, and very clear. It stood quite still, and gazed at them boldly. Tonesta returned its gaze with equal boldness; but her fingers closed firmly on the handle of her hunting-knife, in case of need.

For a full minute, the panther stood, with no movement except for a slow waving of its tail from side to side. Then, suddenly, it crouched, as if to make a spring. Tonesta drew her knife. But instead of leaping upon her, the panther lay over on its side, and began to roll and twist its body playfully. That was merely the beginning of a series of antics, in which it behaved itself exactly like a huge kitten whose body had outgrown its mind.

From that moment Tonesta knew that she had

nothing to fear ; and when Thunder Boy had finished crowing with delight as he watched the fun, she unwrapped him sufficiently to attend to his wants. While she busied herself about the child, the panther watched her with the deepest interest. Nothing she did escaped its observation ; and when at last, all being finished and Thunder Boy made up into a bundle as before, she once more started on her way, the panther accompanied her, sometimes going before, sometimes dropping behind, but never very far away.

As soon as she became used to this strange follower, it began to be a comfort to her to have its company in the dreary solitude of the winter woods, where nothing living showed itself upon the snow. It was quite plain that it took a pleasure in being near her, even at times coming so close as to allow her to stroke its thick tawny fur. It travelled with her in this way for several hours ; then, for some unexplained reason, suddenly bounded off through an opening in the trees, and disappeared.

After its disappearance, the silence and lifelessness of the great woods seemed to settle down more heavily than before. Slowly the time wore away, till the cold light of middle day declined into afternoon.

Suddenly she stopped, listening intently. . . . Was it a cry, or merely the blood singing in her ears ? Even the arctic owl might hear his blood sing in such a cold ! She waited, shivering, while she searched the enormous distances with her straining ears. . . . Again the sound came, faint, tremulous, very far away, yet with a throb in it, a lifting note, like a voice thrown. And it came from the North—*along the line of her own trail !*

She did not wait any longer, but hurried forward.

As she did so, the hunted look in her eyes returned. Only this time the hunters she dreaded were not human. Hardly less cunning, those upon her track now were swifter, more terrible, throwing that thin lifting note as a gathering cry, a summons, because their famished bodies had at last hit a promising trail. . . . WOLVES !

The squaw looked anxiously ahead for some possible shelter which might offer her protection. She had passed the woods and was far out on an open stretch of country bounded on the north-east by a range of low hills. Far ahead, the forest showed again, a dark bar on the horizon where the summits of the spruces seemed to touch the low-hung sky. Somewhere behind that far-off line lay the lodges of her people, but she knew that long before she could gain that shelter, the wolves would be upon her. As she gazed desperately ahead, in the waning light, she made out an indistinct object to the south. It looked like a cabin, but might turn out to be nothing but a clump of bushes. Whatever it was, it would be something to put her back against when the wolves gave the final signal to close in.

She quickened her steps. It was good going on the hard-packed snow, and her strong feet made a steady pace ; but she had travelled a long way since starting, and even her sturdy Indian sinews were beginning to relax. For some time she did not hear the cry again. The silence did not reassure her. The sense that is the possession of hunted things, beast or human, told her that the danger was drawing nearer. Every few minutes she looked back.

The light was fast going, but the reflection from the snow threw into distinctness any dark object which broke its white expanse. As the squaw gave one of

her quick glances behind, she saw a band of dusky forms sweep into view from a hidden hollow.

They were upon her at last !

She gathered her remaining strength, and re-doubled her efforts to reach the object she was making for. As she neared it, she saw that it was a log cabin. Fate seemed driving her from one habitation of the detested pale-faces to another. There might even be pale-faces inside. If it had not been for the greater dread of the terror behind her, she would have turned aside. Again she looked back. What she saw made her measure the distance that still separated her from the cabin with a desperate glance. Those gaunt shapes, that seemed to *flow* rather than run—shadow-bellies that were hollow with the hunger of the snow, overtaking her at last in a breathless silence, more terrible than sound !

She felt her strength failing her ; her feet seemed heavier at every step, as if her snowshoes were weighted down with stones. Yet she struggled forward, hoping against hope to reach the cabin in time.

And now, at last, with their prey close before them, the wolves gave tongue.

When the squaw heard the chorus of short, fierce barks, which is the final rallying cry of a running pack to close in, and pull the game down, she made a final effort, and reached the cabin door. Without waiting to knock, she pushed it hard. As it did not open at the pressure, she threw herself against it with all her weight. Still it held. Instantly she faced round, so that between it and her own body was the precious bundle she was about to defend to her last breath.

Face to face with her pursuers at last, she saw that she had little to hope. The pack consisted of six full

grown timber-wolves, and in each pair of cruel eyes fixed upon her she saw the unmistakable hunger-gleam that is the death-light of the North.

Yet they did not attack immediately, hanging back, wolf-like, till the leader should make his spring. Once he had drawn blood, they would attack in a body, and it would be the beginning of the end. In those last few, terrible moments, it was a battle of the eyes, between the woman and the wolves. As if by instinct she picked the leader out—a heavily-made animal, slightly lower than the rest in build, but with a greater depth of chest—and held him with her gaze. The intentness of her look made him uneasy, for he kept shifting his forefeet while his upper lip curled back from his teeth in a snarl. Seeing their leader's hesitation, the pack drew closer in. Within the narrowing semicircle of hungry eyes, the squaw knew that now it was only a question of moments before the final struggle began. But if hunger gleamed in the wolves' eyes, an even fiercer passion shone in her own; the mother-love against the brute-instinct: the woman against the wolf. For there, at her back, the mightiest medicine-bundle in the world to a mother's heart, hung heavy and warm.

In the cabin behind her, nothing stirred. Her Indian instinct told her that it was deserted—a lumberman's cabin probably, left empty since the Fall; yet it seemed as if some lingering human taint still hung about it, which made the wolves regard it with suspicion; and it was partly owing to this, that their attack was postponed.

Suddenly a swift gleam, like a darting flame, flickered for a moment in the leader's eyes. Fleeting though it

was, the squaw caught it and understood. Quick as the wolf, her knife flashed down. She felt the snatch of fangs at her cheek. There was blood, but not hers alone. As the wolf leaped away, he uttered a yelp of pain. Before he attacked again, she darted forward with her lifted knife, and a ringing cry. Snarling viciously, the wolves drew back. Her unexpected action, joined to the menacing sound of the human voice, startled them for the moment; but when she again fell back on her former position, the semicircle drew in, relentless as before. She watched them narrowly, noting the least motion of an ear, or the curl of a lip; they, in their turn, watching her with equal intensity for an opportunity to close in.

Once more the leader sprang; this time with a roar that seemed to rip his throat. Again the squaw met him with her knife. But now the rest had received their signal, and the whole pack rushed in. The squaw was borne back against the door, stabbing desperately with her long-bladed knife. Two more wolves were wounded. But the pack had tasted blood now, and the fear of the human being ceased to cow it. Twice again the squaw was thrown against the door. Each time, by a swift turn of her body, she saved the precious bundle from being crushed. At last, borne back by sheer weight of numbers, she could not twist herself in time. The child gave a whimpering wail.

Sharper than any wolf-fang, the cry pierced through her.

A moment before, the pack had known what it was attacking—a human being with a bundle on its back. Now, they were faced by a raging Fury that stabbed

and slashed with one terrible knife-blade, as if it had wielded six !

Before this furious onset, the wolves wavered. They began to realize that their prey were not going to fall so easily as they had expected. Yet they would bide their time, having the whole of the night before them in which to finish their deadly work. Long before the dog-star had reached its height, or the " Last Brother " pointed downward to the lonely land, the knife would lie useless on the blood-stained snow, and the bundle cease to cry. The pack would have closed in *for the last time !*

There was a brief pause, while the squaw recovered her breath.

Once more the wolves rallied. The squaw defended herself with desperate bravery. But she knew, with a sickening dread, that her strength was failing, and that the terrible moment was drawing fast upon her when she would have no more power to protect herself and the child from their merciless foes.

The glimmer of the snow was mingling with the twilight. The shadow of the oncoming night seemed to steal outwards from the forest and creep towards the spot where the squaw was making her last despairing stand. The shadow was formless as mist, yet it seemed as if within its formlessness a shape gathered, drawing swiftly nearer. Closer and closer it drew—showing itself now as a long thin body that came lightly in long bounds along the frozen snow.

A wolf sprang for the squaw's throat. It was the wounded leader, determined to pull her down at last. With all her remaining strength, she plunged her knife clean to his heart. But before she could draw it out

another wolf sprang. Was it a wolf? In the failing light it was impossible to see things clearly. It seemed larger in size than the wolves, and of a lighter colour, a dull yellow against the snow. What the squaw could plainly see to her astonishment was that the creature, instead of attacking *her*, fell fiercely upon the wolves. Its onslaught was so unexpected that they were thrown into confusion. Their superiority in numbers was counterbalanced by the lightning-like swiftness of its movements, and the irresistible fury of its attack. Three were already badly wounded, and their leader was drawing his last gasps on the blood-stained snow. In spite of their hunger and rage at being baulked of their prey at the very moment when it seemed about to fall into their power, their courage failed before this sudden whirlwind of fang and claw.

With frothing jaws and hackles bristling they hastily made off in different directions, not stopping till they had reached a safe distance, where they sat down to lick their wounds in the outer circle of the gathering night.

And now the squaw saw with amazement that her rescuer was none other than the panther who had been her companion in the earlier part of the afternoon. Whether its finer sense had warned it that danger threatened the squaw, while still far distant and long before the voices of the oncoming pack could have been caught by even the keenest ear, or whether it had merely chanced to be in the neighbourhood when the wolves rallied for their final attack, she had no means of knowing. Her one thought now was to force an entrance into the cabin with the least possible delay. The door still held, but she found that one of the window shutters

was loose. She managed to wrench this open, and with some difficulty was at last able to crawl through. Once inside, she was fortunate enough to discover a pile of dried fern, and a couple of old blankets ; and when she had satisfied the child's hunger, she made a bed for themselves and almost immediately sank into a sleep of sheer exhaustion.

When she woke, it was already daylight. As there was no means of making a fire, owing to lack of fuel, she decided to continue her journey without any further delay. But first she peeped out cautiously from the window to see if there were any signs of the wolves. Neither they, nor the panther, were to be seen. When she had satisfied herself that nothing lurked in the neighbourhood, near or far, she slung the child upon her back, and started once more upon her way.

It was late in the afternoon when she came in sight of familiar landmarks ; and when at length she dragged herself wearily into the camp of her people, she sank to the ground, without power to move.

CHAPTER III

THE POW-WOW

IT was in the Medicine Lodge, and upon the sacred mat, with the more than sacred Medicine Bundle over his head and the assembled braves before him, that, after a deep and lengthy silence, Seven Brothers opened his mouth.

Apart from being the head chief, Seven Brothers was old enough to command respect, and although his speeches, like his teeth, were few, with appropriate gaps between, they were not the less appreciated by those who sat to hear them.

"Tonesta has returned to us," he said, in his husky Indian voice. "She has lived in the lodges of the pale-faces, far to the north-east."

As these were facts with which everybody present were already fully acquainted, it seemed hardly necessary to state them with such a show of solemnity.

"She does not come alone," he continued. "She brings with her a child."

That also everybody knew, but they liked to hear it again from Seven Brothers' mouth.

"The child had a pale-face for its father," he went on. "And because Tonesta married a pale-face, she can no longer be considered a daughter of our tribe."

After Seven Brothers had made this statement, he

looked up solemnly to the Medicine Bundle, as if to confirm what he had said.

It was very silent in the Medicine Lodge, because no one spoke or moved, except when Running Buffalo threw a handful of dried sweet-grass upon the fire to make a pleasant smell ; also because outside the snow lay thickly upon everything for thousands of leagues, and kept the world from making a noise.

" Why has she returned ? " Scar-face asked, after a due pause.

The question made a great impression, as that was exactly what the company wanted to know, and because everybody regarded Scar-face as a cunning questioner of doubtful things, he himself being as cunning as a fox.

So every one looked at Seven Brothers to see what answer he would give, and Seven Brothers looked at the Medicine Bundle before he replied. And far off, in the remote distance, Little Brother could be heard to bark. But as Little Brother was only the coyote who had a den over Cut-bank way, no one paid any attention to that.

" Tonesta has returned, because the pale-face who was her husband was taken prisoner by the Snake people beyond the mountains," Seven Brothers replied.

Again there was a deep silence, and again it was broken by Scar-face.

" But the Snakes took their scalps from the pale-faces many moons ago," he said. " Why did Tonesta remain with the pale-faces if she wished to return ? "

This was felt to be one of Scar-face's most cunning efforts, and was much approved.

" She says," Seven Brothers answered slowly, " that

the pale-faces kept her a prisoner because they wanted the child to grow up a pale-face warrior, and make their tribe more strong."

This time, it was Kanabiki, one of the older chiefs, who opened his mouth, and just because he did not often speak, his words were listened to with attention.

"The pale-faces are not our friends ; and ever since the Snakes made war on them, they have feared and hated us, even though the Snakes are our enemies also, and we have taken scalps from each other since long before the white man came into our land. And now that she has brought us the child which she bore to the pale-face, they will call her a thief, and will seek to do us harm."

The assembly realized that there was much truth in this, and began to grow a little uneasy. It was felt that it would have been better if Tonesta and the child had remained where they were. It was even suggested by a young brave named Mupo that the child should be sent back. Only then, as Running Buffalo pointed out, the cold was so great that, unless Tonesta went also, the child might not live, and Tonesta was too weak to travel, even if she were willing to go.

"There was the yellow panther," a voice said suddenly. "You have forgotten the yellow panther."

Every one looked at the speaker. It was Mowaki, the old medicine-man, who was held to have a powerful medicine, only he could seldom be induced to make use of it, and who kept himself much apart from the rest of the tribe. And his tepee was apart also, standing by itself in the shadow of the trees. And upon it were painted strange signs which only himself could read.

“ If the yellow panther was there, there is a meaning,” he went on. “ He drove the wolves away, because he had a medicine. The medicine of the panther is very strong. The Great Spirit gave it to him in the beginning when he gave the Thunder Bird his wings. Tonesta and her papoose were under the Yellow Panther’s protection. We should be careful what we do.”

This speech produced a powerful effect. For whatever they did, or did not, believe, their faith in “ medicine,” or Supernatural Power, was very strong. If what Mowaki said were true, then to send Tonesta and her child back to the pale-faces, might be to send the “ medicine ” away, and offend the Great Spirit. Yet not to send them back, might mortally offend the pale-faces. It was very perplexing. The braves were just in that uncertain state of mind, when the words of a wily speaker, playing upon their fears either way, would be most likely to influence them. Scar-face was that speaker.

“ Tonesta and her child will bring us evil,” he said. “ I know the pale-faces. I have passed among their lodges many times. They distrust all those whom they call Redskins. A Snake or a Shoshone—it is all one to them. If Tonesta speaks truly, they wish to make the child a White Man like themselves. So, if we do not send them back the child, they will call together their braves and attack us with smoke-sticks, and leave us with many dead. And who knows that the Yellow Panther had the medicine power? The panther is fierce and very strong, and has no fellowship with the wolves. But he does not attack us. He would be angry that the wolves should kill what he would not kill himself. It does not need the medicine to make a

panther hate a wolf. And why should we regard Tonesta as belonging to us any more? Tonesta was no true daughter of our people, when she went among the pale-faces, and became a wife to one. And so I say . . .”

What Scar-face had further to say did not appear, for while the words were on his lips, a woman's figure passed noiselessly in through the opening of the tepee.

If his dark face could have gone a shade darker, the sudden sight of the unexpected figure would have been enough. As it was, his cunning features remained unmoved, and whatever he felt did not disturb the surface of the scarred mask which had given him his name.

The face and form of the visitor had that about them which, once seen, was not likely to be forgotten. The figure was of medium height, but looked taller than it really was, by reason of its thinness, and the way in which the blanket was drawn closely round it. It held itself as straight as a larch pole, and might have passed for that of a middle-aged woman. But the face was that of an old person, and had seen many moons. Below the eyes hung little pockets of wrinkled skin and the cheeks sagged also, like pouches weighted with sarvis berries, and made deep furrows from the nostrils to the corners of the mouth. But it was the eyes themselves which gave the face its expression of extraordinary power. They were dark and sombre, fixing all objects with a bold, unblinking gaze ; and at times, shone with a glitter that had made more than one stalwart brave uneasy when he caught its uncertain gleam. You felt that life burned there, and something beyond life ; as of fire from the ancient Indian world which the

Great Spirit had kindled in the twilight behind the hills.

For a few moments there was an uncomfortable silence. The braves felt they had been caught in the act of discussion, and each one who had spoken wondered how much the squaw had overheard outside the tepee before she had chosen to make her presence known. What made the pause still more embarrassing was that she neither spoke nor moved, contenting herself with letting her piercing gaze rove over the assembly and at last fix itself on Scar-face as if waiting for him to continue his speech. But Scar-face had no intention of doing so. He knew what he knew, and knew also, disquietingly, that she knew what *she* knew; and he would have given a good deal to be quite certain how much. He shifted his position uneasily, and then endeavoured to appear unconcerned.

As nobody else seemed inclined to speak, Seven Brothers cleared his throat and said :

“ It is of your daughter we have been speaking, Katoya. We think it is not well that she should have taken the child away from the pale-faces. And there are those who think that if she does not take it back to them, they will be angry with us, and will seek to be revenged.”

When he had finished, he looked at her as if he expected her to make some reply. But she said nothing—only looked sharply round at every one present, and then fixed her gaze again on Scar-face, as if she had singled him out as the member of the company likely to breed the most mischief, where her interests were concerned.

Seeing that no one else seemed inclined to speak and

that Katoya herself remained stubbornly silent, Seven Brothers spoke again :

“ And so in the moon when the snow has melted, it will perhaps be good for Tonesta to return to the pale-faces and take back the child.”

Katoya slowly turned her head in his direction, and her face was quiet as a stone. Suddenly, in a loud, clear voice which rang harshly through the lodge, she cried :

“ My daughter will never return to the pale-faces. . . . Tonesta is dead ! ” Then, after a pause, while her eyes swept the company with a look of supreme scorn, “ But you can go on talking ! ”

And with that, she lifted the calf-skin flap of the entrance, and went out as silently as she had entered.

When she had gone, the company looked at each other uneasily without speaking. And far off, in the enormous silence of the snow, “ Little Brother,” the Cut-bank coyote, gave his solitary call.

CHAPTER IV

LITTLE BROTHER

THE moons went by. It was the moon when the geese go north that Little Brother, the coyote, began to take notice. That is, he began to take notice of one particular thing. He noticed it once. He noticed it twice. The third time it was so very noticeable, that he almost sneezed.

The first time it lay very lightly on the ground—a mere ghost of a smell. But Little Brother's nose was fine, very fine, coming down to him through endless coyote ancestors ; so very sharp indeed, that you might almost have said he was a nose that ran on four feet. He lost the scent, it is true, after he had followed it a little way, but that was because the thing that had left it had been gone some time. But on the third occasion, it was so exceedingly plain, and really gave his nose such a shock, that, as I said, it almost made him sneeze. And following up the smell he came upon a trail.

Now Little Brother knew all about trails. There were those of the travelling caribou that took you half across a continent, on a deep-worn track, that cut deeper into history than the carvings on the totem poles. Again there were those made by the big padded feet of lynx or panther, to be trodden very warily, in case any soundless walking might be coming that way. And there were the little trails of hare and mink and marten, leading

through shadowy tunnels to all sorts of mystery places in the grass. Lastly, there were the fairy trails of wood-mice that were scarcely trails at all. But the trail with the sneezy smell was vastly different to all these. It was made by little moccasins on a pair of very Indian feet.

Now Little Brother had no quarrel with Indians, so long as they did not bother him by coming too near. Since the death of his mate, killed by a blow from the forefoot of an infuriated elk, he had taken no second wife, and lived remote from family cares in the old den on the southern slope of Cut-bank, from whence, with much acuteness, he observed the world. The den had no less than three openings, so that if unwelcome visitors made their appearance, he could be not-at-home in a surprisingly short space of time. And as each opening commanded an extent of country as wide as a parish, he had every opportunity of observing what sort of folk were abroad.

He followed this trail at a good slouching trot, because it was easy to see and smell, and his going was as the going of all coyotes, his dangling tail wobbling in and out between his loose-jointed legs so that they all seemed jumbled up together, and you couldn't tell which was what. Indeed his limbs seemed so very loose and carelessly put together, that there seemed some little danger of them coming unstuck if he should run. Yet "God's Dog" (another of his Indian names) could go like the wind itself and never come undone, as many a fleet-footed antelope had learnt to its cost.

Suddenly he stopped short. There, in the very middle of the trail, sat a very small Indian boy, doing something with a stick.

Little Brother was not afraid—not he! The boy was small. His stick was not long. Little Brother had a spring or two inside him which could send his body through the air in the wink of an eyelid, and bounce him out of danger like an india-rubber ball. He just let his body sink till his belly touched the ground, and filled his wrinkling nose with the heavy Indian scent.

For some time, Thunder Boy went on playing with his stick, without being aware that he was being watched by a pair of cunning, gleaming eyes, that glowed like beetles' wings in the grass. Then the sense that wild things and people have when they are being watched, woke in him, and he turned quickly round.

He was a little startled to see the long grey body of a large coyote half hidden in the grass; but he was too much of an Indian to think that the creature meant him any harm. He also knew that in order to find out as much as possible how an animal is going to behave, you must keep absolutely still. So he never moved a muscle of his body or his face, but just looked steadily at the coyote, while the coyote looked back steadily at him. When this silent getting acquainted had lasted some time, Thunder Boy began to make a few remarks. He spoke in a low, soft, caressing tone of voice, as much as to say: "I'm not going to upset you, and you're not going to upset me. I'm just an Indian boy and you're just a coyote; and there isn't any harm in either of us that need prevent us from being friends."

Now don't make any mistake. When Thunder Boy said that, he *didn't* say it! I mean, he didn't use those exact words. What he did was to put his mind into the shape of them, and then to shoot it straight into

Little Brother's, so that it all got there with a rush. And Little Brother, instead of being astonished, just took it as a matter of course, and sat up and grinned. And when Little Brother grinned, he let his lower jaw part company with his upper one till it was a grand sight to see the gleaming litter of sharp teeth that lay hidden cunningly in the long lair of his mouth.

Thunder Boy observed the teeth, and then said abruptly :

“ You're the Voice ! ”

Little Brother didn't attempt to contradict that, because he knew perfectly well that, if one important part of him was tooth, another was certainly Voice. In the art of using his voice, Little Brother was a complete master. From the short barks, growing louder and louder till at last they changed into a ringing squawl—with which it is the coyote custom to sweeten the air just after sunset—to the great singing note, smooth and long-drawn, which vibrates along the tingling stillness just before the dawn, Little Brother could produce a whole orchestra of horror from his wicked wolfish throat.

He replied to Thunder Boy's statement by twitching his nose, which, as every sensible person would understand, meant simply : “ And you are the Smell ! ”

Thunder Boy didn't contradict that either, because he knew that whatever artfulness a coyote may be guilty of, or however his eyes or his ears may lead him to make mistakes, his nose is the one part of him which never goes wrong, and which always speaks the truth. So that although Thunder Boy was too close to himself, as it were, to realize what he smelt like, he knew by experience that nothing living moves along the trails without

spilling a certain portion of itself in body-scent and foot-scent for other folks to smell. And so the smell part of him being established by the coyote's truthful nose, the conversation between the two became really one between a Voice and a Smell.

"You're a long way from the Great Smell," said the Voice, wobbling the tip of its nose. And by "the Great Smell," of course It meant the Indian Camp, with its continual scents of fire and food, and human movement, which tickled the noses of the wood-folk for long distances down-wind.

This was perfectly true, as Thunder Boy had never ventured so far into the bush before, and he wasn't quite sure how he was going to get back. He might have retorted that a coyote is always a long way from everywhere, and never stays long in any one place. Instead, he asked the coyote how he did it, and wouldn't he do it now?

And Little Brother having taken a sudden liking to the Little Smell, did it without further pressing, throwing his head well back, and dropping his lower jaw, and sent out such a piercing burst of squawling that the high rocks on Rising Wolf became squawling voices too.

After this exhibition of his skill, he sat grinning at his new acquaintance, as much as to say: "And what do you think of that?"

What Thunder Boy really did think wouldn't have been polite to say; because the naked truth was he considered Little Brother's voice to be one of those which sound all the better for being filtered through the tops of the spruces, and having some of the rasp rubbed out of them by friction with the air. But he

could, with perfect veracity, say that it was a strong, a carrying, an altogether marvellous wind-instrument for blasting through the stillness till the echoes rang.

After that, very little more was said on either side. . . . Only each of them put out all sorts of fine feelers through their three senses, leaving out taste and touch, and made up for the other two by a wonderful sixth sense, which only wild, or half-wild things possess, and which neither sees, nor hears, nor smells, nor tastes, nor touches, but only *knows*.

And when each had satisfied himself that the other was a person to be trusted, they parted on the best of terms and went their several ways.

CHAPTER V

HOW THUNDER BOY GREW UP

THE growing up of Thunder Boy was a strange mixture of many things. As regards his education, you might say he had been snatched from the White Man in a day and a night into a civilization a thousand years before. He had no idea of that, of course. To him, the Indianness of the world as it presented itself to him, was the only thing that could be, like the rising of the moon, or the way the river ran. And so, as he came to know it, the life was only wonderful because it was new, and not strange because different from something he had known before. In the tepees, they did not warm you in sugar-boxes before things that clicked, and although the fire was not without voices, they did not whisper secretly in iron cages stuffed with light and heat. The camp-fires were a great joy to Thunder Boy. When the fresh resinous fir-wood was put on, it crackled and sizzled and talked forest talk so fast that you couldn't follow it at all. All you could tell was that it was a good, crisp, snappy sort of language, in a terrible hurry to get what it had to say said ; and that, sooner or later, you would see its tongues, right down to their roots in the throat of the fire, wagging in yellow flame.

How they leaped ! how they shot out and up, those flames ! lighting the brown faces round them, and the

smoky-topped tepees, and even casting wild, dancing lights and shadows out upon the river, and back as far as the first rows of the trees ! Wonderful as the camp was by day, it grew more wonderful still at night ; for then tall figures, wrapped in blankets, and with feathers on their heads, appeared out of nowhere into firelight, or walked out again into nowhere, with lights dancing on their backs. By degrees, Thunder Boy began to know these flame-lit personages by the shapes of their faces, and by their names. There was Pomiskah, who was noted for being the largest person in the camp, and who never exerted himself if he could help it. So it was not surprising if when the firelight danced on *him*, it was over large fat surfaces that wobbled as he walked. Then there was Kionesta, who was a river man, and could do tremendous things in swimming and diving, and made a canoe dance through the water as if it were alive. And Three Bears—so called because he had killed, single-handed, three grizzlies, down Montana way, and always walked with circumspection as if he were watching for a fourth. And then there would come, with a wandering, uncertain walk, Little Robe, whose wits were like his walk, and who, according to the gentle Indian way of putting it, had been “ touched by the Great Spirit,” and so was not expected to be like other men. And him Thunder Boy always watched with a wondering awe, as a privileged person who was familiar with the Things that went past behind the trees. And then, with a dull gleam in his furtive eyes, and a tall figure that bent a little forward as he moved, Scar-face, who had a habit of saying soft things with his tongue, and doing hard things with his hands. And whenever his dark mask of a face passed into the

firelight, Thunder Boy had an unpleasant fancy that the light flamed up as it touched the scar.

Only, however familiar these various persons became by day, at night each seemed to be himself mixed with a strange person who made faces in the flicker of the fires. And even after he had gone to bed, he could look out through the opening of the tepee, and see the mixed persons whom he knew and yet did not know, pass and repass noiselessly, carrying half-lit faces across the shadow of the night.

And there were sounds : sounds in the camp, sounds outside it, and sounds borne to it on dark currents of air from very far away. The camp noises he soon learnt to know : the squawling of some newly-born papoose, which uttered, without having been taught, the shrill war-cry of all Indian babies who had a grievance—generally associated with their stomachs or their teeth—since the beginning of all things : the barking or fighting of husky dogs, equally untaught, because the husky world, like that of the papooses, was governed by hunger, and was a snap-snatch-and-gulp-it-down sort of existence, where everything in you, from tooth to tail, had to struggle for sheer life and be as tough and durable as an old bull-moose's hide : the hollow noise of a medicine-man's drum, beaten with slow taps or quick, softly or loudly, according to the disease of the patient which the drumming was supposed to cure ; and the little Thunder Boy's ears were so very sensitive and quick to note differences in pitch and volume, that he came to recognize one medicine-man's drumming from another's and especially the performance of Running Weasel, whose beating began very slow and soft, at irregular intervals, as if it were the sick man's pulse,

throbbing so that you could hear it ; and then rose in rushing notes, louder and faster, till it became a continual roar and a thunder, like that of the great storm during which he, Thunder Boy, had been born, and which had given him his name. Or sometimes it would be singing—women singing the old tribal songs of War, and Love, and Hunting ; Sun, Moon, and Stars ; with long-drawn notes that wailed into Fox and Wolf minors ; or short sharp ones, like coyote barks ; or, sometimes, if the singers were very far away, soft, windy rushes of sound like the wind in the tree-tops when the lodge-ears flapped in the unquiet nights.

And if the nights were flame and shadow, drumming and song, the days were great sunlights and roaring waters ; and falling into the river, and being fished out again ; and scuffles with Cotton Tail, Running Weasel's seven-year-old son, who wanted to lord it over Thunder Boy, and got a black eye for his pains ; and plots and dark designs with the same Cotton Tail (when they had made it up again, and were friends) for the plaguing and complete undoing of Grease-Melter, who was regarded by mothers with large families, as a sort of tribal aunt, or private police force, for the suppression of bad boys ; and, later on, wonderful excursions down the river in Kionesta's canoe, during which he learnt to paddle, swim, dive, and fish, and became as much at home on water as he was on land.

And as the moons passed into each other, and Thunder Boy passed with them from childhood to boyhood, he grew up so wholly a little redskin that the tribe forgot he was really half a pale-face ; and so the white father he was supposed to have had, became so very pale indeed that he faded out behind the trees.

It was a quick growth that he made in the rich forest air, keen with the tang of the spruces. And it was not only the sharpness of the spruce that guided his sense of smell ; but all the odours of the bush—cedar, tamarisk, and balsam-fir—entered into him, and carried the very selves of the wild places into his inmost soul. And so, as he grew, he went on learning not only things of the Indian life of camp and river ; but many secrets of the deep woods besides, in a way of which not even his grandmother knew, and of which only he and Little Brother held the secret.

CHAPTER VI

KATOYA SEES VISIONS

THERE was no mistaking the fact, that, as a grandmother, compared with other people's grandmothers, Katoya was odd. Thunder Boy noticed that, very early in his experience of her, and found no reason to alter his views about it, as time went on. For instance, while other people's grandmothers spent most of their existence in the camp or its neighbourhood, painting parfleches, tanning raw hides, or plaiting fish-lines out of strands of willow bark, Katoya had a habit of disappearing in the bush for whole days at a time. Even on the rare occasions when she took him with her, he never could make out that she had any other object than to wander about among the loneliest places, watching and waiting for things that never came. And generally she left him behind her in the care of some other squaw, telling him not to leave the camp until she came back. So as there was always plenty of mischief to get into at home, if you only had patience and watched your opportunity, Thunder Boy usually contrived to get more satisfaction out of the arrangement than those with whom he was left in charge.

It was on one of these occasions that, one morning early in the moon of rose, Katoya disappeared, leaving Thunder Boy in the charge of Grease-Melter, the tribal

aunt. It turned out to be an important day in Katoya's life, with hands that reached far into the future and plucked its fatal robe. Grease-Melter also found it memorable for more reasons than one, and *she* made it memorable for Thunder Boy by means of *her* far-reaching hands!

Once Katoya believed herself to be out of sight of the camp, her whole attitude changed. Her eyes seemed to be everywhere, searching the thickets with their piercing gaze. She moved with a furtive tread, on moccasins that gave only the faintest waft of sound, and set her feet so warily that she never broke a twig. It was by this noiseless movement, alternating with hours of patient watching beside the trails, that she gained her knowledge of the forest's inner secrets, as few even of the wisest Indians knew them, and so added to her knowledge moon by moon.

One of her favourite observation-posts was a high slope to the east of the Cut-bank canyon, below which several runways joined, and where she could sit with her back against an old pine-stub, in such absolute stillness, that the sharpest eyes confused the two objects as if they were one vegetable growth. And at this spot, she took up her position in the early afternoon.

It was the hour when the wild creatures began to be on the move again after their midday rest. From the fir-thickets on the hillsides, the deer stepped cautiously out, sniffing the air daintily as they turned their twitching noses upwind to sift its tell-tale smells. A big dog fox came trotting leisurely along the trail, passing from his daytime cover to his afternoon hunting-ground on the western slope of the hill. A rabbit stirred in his form and checked himself just in time, as he saw the

dark red fur ripple along his would-be murderer's ribs, not three leaps below him. A small, yellow-brown shape that humped its evil-looking back, and was the same colour as the fallen fir-needles, was the next to follow, and the rabbit received a second shock as its deadly foe, the weasel, disappeared swiftly in the grass. Tiny wood-mice, like little grey-brown earth-spirits, ran in small gushes of rustling sound among the grasses and old leaves, and now and then mistook Katoya's moccasins for portions of the landscape. Yet of all that stealthy world, going by on its secret business of killing, or trying not to be killed, not one perceived the motionless form by the pine-stub, with the watchful eyes which nothing that moved escaped.

Yet what she saw and heard were only the sights and sounds of the old Indian world, familiar to her from childhood, familiar also to generation after generation of Red Men, stretching back and back to remote ages when man was only half man, and had scarcely emerged from the beast.

But presently other shapes began to people her brain ; forms gathered out of the forgotten past ; events which had happened long before she was born. And so, as at all such times, when her mind became tangled, as it were, with the roots of the centuries, Katoya sank into deep trance.

The visionary power came and went without her conscious will. Sometimes, for weeks and even months together, it would lie dormant : then, suddenly, without warning, it would take complete possession of her, and she would see, unrolled before her eyes, the history of her race. What actually happened around her then ceased to affect her ; and though she remained

conscious of its outward form, its shapes and sounds mixed themselves so closely with those of her trance that her vision was troubled by two worlds. It was so now ; so that when, at the foot of the slope, a deer which had been feeding unconsciously below her, suddenly bounded in mid-air and fell with an arrow in its heart, it did not put to flight the phantom herd which pastured in her brain.

Instantly, an Indian sprang from the underwood and rushed towards the fallen deer. He had scarcely done so when a second Indian burst into view.

Deep in her trance, Katoya saw what followed as clearly as if in full possession of her waking senses ; only with this difference : that, although the faces of both Indians were familiar to her, she was unable to attach their individualities to her waking life. She saw the angry meeting ; heard the dispute over the deer, which had apparently been killed by the first Indian while being hunted by the second ; and grasped the fact that, apart from the present quarrel, the two were ancient enemies. She knew what was about to happen before it took place. Yet although she strove her utmost to warn the second Indian that his foe was about to strike, the muscles of her throat refused to stir, and her whole body remained petrified in her trance. She watched the swift upward motion of the arm, saw the sun gleam on the blade of the knife ; heard a shrill cry ; and then the visionary tide deepened its waters, and the scene became submerged.

When Katoya returned to her waking faculties, the afternoon was far advanced and the shadows already growing long. As she went homewards her mind was troubled. She was trying to remember something

which she knew she had seen in her trance, something which, in spite of all her efforts, lurked in her confused brain like an animal in a tangled thicket which refused to be hunted out. And the more it eluded her, the more she felt the utmost importance of driving it out from the undergrowths of her mind.

When she got back to camp, she found Thunder Boy waiting for his supper. Her mind was so preoccupied that she did not ask him how he had spent his time during her absence. Grease-Melter could have enlightened her on that head, but fortunately for him, Grease-Melter was at that moment fully engaged in getting her own supper, and so her tale of his iniquities would have to be postponed. And as he could see by his grandmother's manner that she had something on her mind, he thought it wise to hold his peace, trusting if Grease-Melter should come later in the evening, he would be safely in his bed.

But presently he called her to look at a brave coming into camp with a dead deer on his back. Katoya looked up from her cooking, and saw a man's figure, stooping under the weight of a big buck which he was carrying Indian fashion, each foreleg being fastened to a hind-leg, and his arms put through the angle formed by the two, the animal's head nodding over his shoulder as he walked.

As he passed the spot where Katoya was busy outside the tepee, their eyes met. The instant she saw his face, her memory found what it had been groping for. Immediately the scene in the bush re-formed. She saw the deer drop ; the swift stroke ; the sun-glint on the knife ; and the victim fall.

Scar-face !

Now,, indeed, she *knew* !

“ Running Wolf went hunting, too,” Thunder Boy said, as soon as Scar-face had passed on. “ I wanted to go with him, but he would not let me. He said he was going on a very big hunting, and would kill a grizzly. Scar-face could not kill a grizzly. He is not brave enough. *He can only kill a deer !* ”

“ How do you know what Scar-face could not kill ? ” Katoya asked abruptly. “ You have not even seen him kill a deer.”

“ I *have* seen him kill ! ” he retorted abruptly. “ I saw him kill Many-berries’ puppy. He twisted its neck hard, very hard, and threw it into the river. Many-berries cried very much, so that lots of water came out of her eyes. But I told her that Scar-face was not afraid to kill the puppy, because he knew it could not bite. Scar-face was not pleased inside himself when he heard me say that. He said he would throw me in after the puppy, only Running Wolf was coming along the bank, and so he did not dare.”

“ It is best to leave Scar-face alone,” Katoya said. “ He is a bad man. Do not go near him. I also have seen him kill.”

But when Thunder Boy asked her what she had seen him kill, she told him to eat his supper and ask no more questions. And directly afterwards she packed him off to bed. He went reluctantly, because he wanted to see Running Wolf return with a dead grizzly on his back ; only if he did not go, he knew that Grease-Melter might at any moment arrive, carrying something awful which, if it were not a whole grizzly, would be most certainly a tale. But he made his grandmother promise that if

Running Wolf returned with the grizzly, she would wake him at once. And Katoya promised, knowing only too certainly that Running Wolf would never return.

When he had gone to sleep, and darkness had fallen, Katoya went secretly to Eagle Plume's tepee. She found him smoking at the entrance before a brightly burning fire on which his wife Sakomix was cooking. Without a word, Katoya pointed to the interior of the tepee, and both of them saw that she wished to make some private communication without attracting the attention of other members of the tribe. When they had entered with her she said :

"Your son, Running Wolf, went hunting this morning."

"Yes," Eagle Plume answered uneasily, for he knew by Katoya's manner that there was more behind her words than appeared. "We thought he would have returned by nightfall. It is not good to travel in the night."

"I came to tell you that he does not return to-night," Katoya said, speaking very slowly. "He has followed a long trail. But Scar-face has returned. He went hunting also."

"I know," the chief answered. "I saw him come into camp a while ago with his kill."

"Yes," said Katoya with emphasis. "*I* saw him kill."

As she spoke, she stood in such a position that the firelight, striking in through the opening of the tepee, fell full upon her face.

"You wish to tell us . . . ?" Sakomix broke in, with a husky voice, ending in a low cry.

"I wish to tell you," Katoya answered, still more

slowly, " that Scar-face has not brought back *all* he has killed."

In the flicker of the fire, lightening Katoya's expression with terrible illumination, Eagle Plume and Sakomix read the reason why their son Running Wolf would not come back along the trail.

* * * * *

Very early next day, at the breaking of the dawn, a party of Indians, with Katoya at their head, noiselessly left the camp. She led them direct to the place where she had seen Scar-face attack his victim. The body of Running Wolf was discovered not far off, hidden in a patch of fern.

The party returned to camp immediately in order to capture Scar-face, and accuse him of the crime. But, with the cunning born of guilty fear, Scar-face had disappeared. Having watched the party leave the camp under Katoya's guidance and having followed it to the spot she pointed out, it became quite clear to him that she must have been an unseen witness of the deed.

CHAPTER VII

HOW LITTLE BROTHER SAVED THE SITUATION

IT was the moon of roses when Scar-face disappeared. The Fall came ; and the geese came ; and the geese were followed by the snow ; and the bears went to bed for the winter ; and Thunder Boy was glad to snuggle down in a bed made from the skins of other bears who would never wake again, and to listen to the blizzard as it came shrieking from the Pole. And then Spring came again ; and again the geese went north ; and once again the moon of roses drifted up on the high tide of the summer and the world smelt sweet. Yet of Scar-face, or his whereabouts, not the vaguest rumour came to trouble the scented air.

And all this time—except when the snow made it impossible—Thunder Boy went to school. That is, he had a great many meetings with Little Brother and learnt a vast quantity of things which are not to be had in an ordinary education.

The worst of it was, Little Brother was a vagrant sort of teacher you could not always find at school. The school premises were large and airy enough (not to say draughty, when the wind blew down Cut-bank canyon from the north) and commanded a magnificent stretch of geography when you wanted to see where places were. As for history, there were stubs of old pine trees and jags of old rocks that took you back into

the past quite as far as you wanted to go. Arithmetic—up to about seven—was quite perfect. After that, things became just nouns of multitude, and Little Brother wasn't going to fuss about the higher mathematics. He would have taught grammar with the greatest of pleasure, if there had been any to teach, but a series of short barks, ending in a kind of squall, or the one-syllable cries which meant love, hatred, or game, were parts of throat, rather than parts of speech, and did not need the elaboration of syntax to make their meaning clear. What he could teach, and *did*—magnificently—was the subject of Natural History. And if "God's Dog" had been so ill-advised as to have accepted a professorship in this science at any of the great Universities, the authorities would have had to completely remodel the textbooks for the student youth of America and Europe.

But the finest teacher is useless if he isn't at his post to teach. And quite half the times that Thunder Boy visited the school, Little Brother was off doing practical geography with four legs and a tail.

It happened like this, one never-to-be-forgotten day when Thunder Boy had watched his opportunity, and stolen out of camp when no one was looking. For that was part of the joy of meetings with Little Brother. It all had to be kept a deep and dreadful secret so that no one—not even his grandmother—should have the least idea that he was on terms of intimate friendship with "God's Dog"; and that what to most of the Indians was little more than a Voice out Cut-bank canyon way, was to *him* no mere Little Brother by name, but a Little Brother in fact.

Now when Thunder Boy reached the spot at the en-

trance to the canyon, where they usually had "school," and found no one there, he knew by past experience that it was no good trying to find the coyote, and that the wisest thing to do was just to sit down and wait. So he did ; did it very patiently in Indian fashion, and sat, and sat, and sat. And at long last, Little Brother came. He made no apologies for keeping Thunder Boy waiting. He just sat down opposite and grinned. And by the way he grinned, Thunder Boy knew that not only had he been having a good time, but that he was fully prepared to enjoy a still better. And then began one of those series of questions and answers, in which, though nothing you would call words was used, each understood the other's meaning.

All at once, Thunder Boy became aware that Little Brother was not attending. He was looking past his head, as if he saw something a long way behind. And his ears were cocked as if he listened a long way in that direction too. And his nose was working a hundred twitches to the minute. Yet when Thunder Boy turned round, there was nothing to be seen but the tall trunks of the trees. Not a twig moved ; not a leaf fell. The forest looked exactly as it had looked before. When he turned his head back again, Little Brother had disappeared. Expecting that he would return in a little while, Thunder Boy sat where he was. But the time went on, and the coyote did not come back.

It began to be lonely after Little Brother had gone ; at least, if the feeling was not loneliness, it was a feeling that he had sat long enough among the trees, and that he would like to be going back to camp. And then, all at once, he felt he must look round. There, not more than a dozen paces away, stood an Indian with a single

eagle's feather in his scalp lock, and wearing the clothes of a tribe which was strange to him. His face was so thickly covered up with paint that it was very difficult to make out what it was like under the disguise. And yet there was something about it which made Thunder Boy fancy he had seen it before. It was the first time he had ever met a stranger in the forest ; and he did not know what he ought to do. So he remained perfectly still, with every muscle ready for instant action. The more he looked at the stranger's face, the less he liked it. The nose was long, with a high bridge. The forehead was narrow, and sloped far back. Where it met the nose, it wrinkled into deep lines, and below the cheeks went furrows like old travois tracks. But it was the eyes which made Thunder Boy uneasy. They looked at you, and yet did not look at you. They were furtive, quick-glancing, full of suspicion and of secret things.

The man began to ask questions, many questions one after another. He asked them in an easy manner, as if it did not greatly matter whether they were answered or not. Yet Thunder Boy could not help feeling that if they were not answered it would matter a great deal.

The man was very close now. Thunder Boy was an excellent judge of distances. He knew when people were near enough. He noted how thickly the paint was laid in bars across the face. But he saw something else which was more than a bar, and went deeper than the paint. It sloped from the left ear towards the mouth, and looked remarkably like a scar.

Suddenly the man made a swift movement forward. But a weasel could not have been quicker than

Thunder Boy as he ducked. The Indian's hand missed him by a quarter of an inch. Thunder Boy took to his heels. He was a quick runner. He knew how to double in and out among the trees, and to take advantage of any turn and twist of the trail in order to baffle a pursuer. But he had no time to think which was the best way to go. His one thought was to escape in any direction at first, and then make for home as quickly as possible afterwards. It was not necessary to look behind him to know that he was being hotly pursued. The swift thud of the following moccasins and the swish of brushed leaves told him that. And although he doubled and twisted with marvellous rapidity, the terrible moccasins were always close behind him, double and turn as he would.

He was in a part of the forest which he knew well. There was a clear trail which ran downhill for nearly a quarter of a mile, and then joined a stream at a point where the valley narrowed to a gorge with thickly wooded sides. Beyond the gorge the country opened out towards the river, and the neighbourhood of the camp, where there was a good chance of his falling in with some of his own people.

He put forth every effort now in order to reach the gorge. But it was plain to him that his pursuer was doing the same, as if he was familiar with the lie of the country, and was trying to cut him off before he could reach the gorge. The moccasins were coming on now at a tremendous pace. Thunder Boy was going like the wind. His flying feet hardly seemed to touch the earth. Gradually, it seemed to him that his pursuer was losing ground. Then, where the trail bent to the south before its final descent to the

stream, he saw suddenly, to his horror, that a huge windfall lay right across the path. It was too big to climb over. To go round it at either end would mean a loss of precious time. He swerved quickly to the right, up the hill. His pursuer, seeing what had happened, dashed down towards the stream in order to cut him off, if possible, before he could reach the gorge.

When Thunder Boy had got round the root end of the tree, he saw that the Indian was already at the stream, and knew when too late that he had done the wrong thing. Still he did not give up hope, and made a desperate rush down-hill. The thing became a furious race as to who should reach the gorge first—Thunder Boy above, the Indian below. He had almost reached it, when the Indian, making a violent effort, caught him up. As he did so, and in the very moment when he was triumphantly about to seize his prey, something in the nature of a loose-limbed whirlwind swept down upon him from the hill. He had a confused vision of a grey, hairy body which snarled furiously as it hurled itself upon him, and then, when he had actually laid hold of Thunder Boy's buckskin shirt, he completely lost his balance and was thrown off his feet.

Thunder Boy never stopped. He had just time to realize that his deliverer was Little Brother, as, with the sound of the scuffle behind him, he dashed into the gorge. He knew it would be madness to delay even for a moment to see what happened, and he had sufficient confidence in the coyote to believe that he could be trusted to look after himself.

He arrived at the camp in such a breathless condition

that he lay down to recover himself, before appearing at the tepee. When he told his grandmother his adventure, she looked very grave. She made him repeat his description of the stranger several times over, and when she had satisfied herself that he had nothing more to add, she lost no time in going to Seven Brothers.

As usual, he was seated in meditation outside his tepee.

"Scar-face has come back," she said, without throwing any words away.

Seven Brothers turned a look of vacancy upon her.

"I have had no word of it," he said in his heavy way.

"But *I* bring you the word," Katoya caught him up sharply.

Seven Brothers, disturbed by the tone, looked at her uneasily.

"If he has returned, where is he?" he asked.

Katoya nodded in the direction of the trees.

Seven Brothers grunted, instead of taking the trouble to speak; meaning that he was fully aware that the bush contained many objects, of which Scar-face might possibly be found to be one.

Seeing that he did not want to be convinced, Katoya recounted Thunder Boy's adventure. Seven Brothers would have preferred to go on being incredulous. But Katoya had a way of stating things which made you believe them, whether you wanted to or not. It was very annoying that, just as he should have settled himself down to smoke in a thick sort of peacefulness that was almost like a fog, this terrible Indian woman should have come with her disquieting tales of the coming back of one who had disappeared so entirely

that he ought to have been as good as dead. The times were not good times. There were rumours in the air. Their ancient enemies, the Snakes, were supposed to be in movement somewhere in the enormous tracts to the west of Mount Rising Wolf. And when the Snakes moved, they generally did it murderously, after much appropriate dancing and beating of drums. To make matters worse, a White Man had been killed on the borders of the Peace River Settlement in circumstances which left very little doubt of its being Indian work. And it was very unfortunate that the Peace River people should belong to those who firmly believed that if you wanted peace you must retire to bed armed to the teeth. For now they had vowed vengeance on every redskin, no matter what his tribe, and had sent a message to the military commander at Fort George. So between the bloodthirsty Snakes on one hand, and the scarcely less bloodthirsty Peace people on the other, Seven Brothers felt that at any moment he might be plunged into something as unpleasantly hot as boiling sarvis-berry stew, without the taste of the berries to tickle the palate. If Scar-face had really come back, he could not have chosen a more inconvenient moment.

As always, at times of uncertainty, Seven Brothers called together a meeting of his braves. Moreover, he summoned Katoya to appear, bringing Thunder Boy with her.

CHAPTER VIII

SCAR-FACE TAKES HIS REVENGE

THE days went slowly by. Nothing happened except that the wild rice grew higher in the swamps, and the Sora Rails did an immense amount of chattering in their green mansions in the reeds. And all that seemed to happen in the nights was that the deer took advantage of the waxing moon, and were out grazing till dawn, and that the sweet odours of birch and balsam-fir filled the air with a richer perfume as the moon increased. The scouts whom Seven Brothers had sent out at the conclusion of the meeting returned one by one, without having discovered any sign of Scar-face, or any other suspicious trail. And so, in the absence of all outward causes for anxiety, the camp settled down to its usual monotony of uneventful calm.

In spite of all this, Katoya was not satisfied. *She* was not to be lulled into security by watching wild rice, nor soothed by the chatter of Sora Rails. That the scouts had brought no news of their enemies, did not reassure her. The feet of the Snakes were not always swift, and they had many leagues to travel ; but whenever they came, they brought death with them, as surely as the moon of migration brought the geese. She did not depend upon rumours, nor the lack of rumours. Her information was of another kind, and

was drawn from sources outside the knowledge of the tribe. Night and day her mind was open to the forest. Night and day she laid a cunning ear against the secret trails. Along those viewless paths came the footsteps of those whose moccasins had not yet arrived. For, all her life, Katoya's mind had been a threshold worn by wandering feet. They were coming now, nearer, day by day. Down the dark canyons to the west, through the interminable glooms of the spruce woods ; along the world-old trails of moose and caribou ;— they were coming in a terrible, unhurrying pace that would no more loiter nor turn back than the waxing of the moon.

And it was not the deer only who were abroad in the moonlit nights. Often and often, in the sweet grass of the glades, a grazing buck would raise its head suspiciously, and blow the air out of its nostrils, as the shadowy form of an old Indian woman passed stealthily through the trees. And then he would circle warily to leeward, testing the air delicately at every pause in order to sift the information his nose gave him, and find out what danger was to be expected from this travelling bundle of human smells.

Again and again Katoya warned Seven Brothers of the danger which she felt approaching, but as she could bring no tangible proof of what she affirmed, he was more than inclined to treat the whole story of Thunder Boy's encounter as a child's exaggerated tale. Besides, he was growing comfortably old. He did not know exactly how old, since his totem-pole was not precise about dates. But it had many interesting signs upon it, which, if you read them carefully, would take you back a long way through the moons. And he

infinitely preferred to sit before his lodge-door in the sun, and dream away the hours, than upset himself by making preparations for what, after all, might never happen.

And as far as anyone could see, Katoya did not make any preparations either. The only observable difference in her way of living was that she went into the forest more than was her general custom, and that she forbade her grandson to go at all.

And the surprising thing was that he did not disobey. Not that he liked submission to his elders any more than other Indian boys of his own age; but he possessed a finer instinct than theirs. He did not obey Katoya because she was his grandmother, but he followed her guidance, as a wolf-cub follows its mother's, because his instinct told him it was the safest thing to do.

It was more than three weeks after Thunder Boy's adventure with Scar-face that, one night, Katoya, farther in her rambles than usual, came upon what she dreaded. She was slowly skirting a swamp which lay at the northern foot of Mount Rising Wolf when, in the shadow of some large hemlocks which grew at the edge, she saw the glow of a smouldering fire. She stopped dead, listening, but there was nothing to be heard save the croaking of the frogs, and the repeated call of a solitary grey owl at the other end of the marsh. The moon being by now in her last quarter, yielded only a partial light. Nevertheless, to Katoya's night-accustomed sight, objects which to ordinary eyes would have been all but indistinguishable, were clearly outlined. And even from where she stood, she could make out dark shapes which she knew were Indians

rolled in their blankets with their feet towards the fire.

With extreme caution, she moved forward, feeling certain, from what she saw, that she had come upon a camp of the Snakes. If this were so, and she were discovered, she knew that her doom, as a spy, would be swift and sure. Notwithstanding the danger, she approached still nearer. The Indians seemed to be wrapped in deep sleep. Yet she, of all people, was not to be deceived by appearances merely. And when, beyond the first group under the hemlocks, she became aware of another, and yet another, it was plain to her that she had not fallen by chance upon a mere advance band of scouts, but was in the presence of the main body of the enemy. And now she realized to the full the immense risk she ran. A false step, a snapping twig, and, the alarm once given, a hundred braves might leap to their feet before she had a chance to escape. Yet she did not turn back. She was here for a purpose. She must run every risk, in order to be able to carry back to her people a definite idea of the strength of their enemies.

Across the shadows, across half-lit spaces, glimmering with the moon or the glow of dying fires, around circle after circle of sleeping warriors, Katoya drifted soundlessly, like the passing of a dream.

Who shall say what mysterious warning comes to those who are deeply asleep?—or why, if it comes, it should rouse one and not another? Katoya made no sound that could disturb even the lightest sleeper. The wood-mouse running over the fallen leaf made no more noise than she. Yet though she hid herself from hearing and almost from vision, not all her secret

forces could prevent her powerful personality from spilling itself into the night.

Suddenly one of the sleepers stirred, and lifted himself on an elbow.

Less than a dozen paces away, Katoya held her breath. In the glow of the fire near which he lay, she could see the lower part of his body plainly, but his shoulders and face remained in shadow. As she watched, dreading discovery every moment, one of the smouldering brands parted in two, and fell. The next instant a crackling flame spurted and flared. The Indian sat up, so that his face was full in the light. It showed a deep scar running from mouth to ear.

For a moment, Katoya's heart seemed to stand still. If he saw her, she knew it was the end. She did not move the fraction of an inch. Only her fingers felt instinctively for the handle of her hunting-knife.

With an intense gaze Scar-face sought to pierce the surrounding glooms. He saw the forms of his sleeping companions motionless on each side of him. He saw the trunks of the birches stand out like tarnished silver from the blackness behind. He saw, or thought he saw, the grey stump of an old rampike, whose top had long since gone down. His eyes, confused by the flicker of the flame, rested for a moment on the stump, passed on to the trunks about it, returned to the same point and lingered there, as if something about it lent it an odd appearance, and finally wandered off to search suspiciously elsewhere. When their gaze again returned, the stump had disappeared.

A moon in her last quarter, and now setting, gave less light than ever—certainly little enough in those endless labyrinths through which Katoya had to feel her way.

But, as with other wild intelligences, human as well as beast, she trusted for guidance to other faculties than that of sight. That strange sense of direction, by which moose, and wolf, and wild man, find their way through trackless wildernesses in the moonless nights, to the exact spot which they have quitted many hours before, guided her feet. Whether Scar-face had discovered his mistake and given the alarm, or had lain down again to sleep, she could not tell. All she knew was that her fears of the last few weeks had been only too well founded, and that the danger which she had felt approaching for so long was now so close at hand that her people might expect to find themselves attacked by their deadliest foes before many hours were over.

In spite of the broken country through which she had to pass in order to reach the camp by the quickest route, she arrived just as dawn was breaking. Without losing a moment, she told Seven Brothers what she had just seen ; but Seven Brothers, only just aroused from slumber, did not like his mind to be upset so early in the day. From Katoya's account, their enemies' camp was a long way off, and they would probably not attack until the following day ; even if they did not change their minds, and not attack at all !

As the day wore on, Katoya's uneasiness increased. All her senses were strained towards the forest, in a north-westerly direction, for that was the quarter from which she felt the danger drawing nearer, though she could not have given any particular reason. She never ceased to go about the camp urging the braves to have their weapons in readiness for the arrival of the foe who was now so close at hand. Her warnings were so urgent and convincing that even Seven Brothers was stirred

out of his usual indifference, to give orders that a strict watch should be kept at all the approaches to the camp, and that every fighting man should be fully armed. In spite of her natural courage, Katoya's spirits were low. The Snakes were a fierce and bloodthirsty race. As fighters they had gained for themselves a terrible renown. From her earliest years, their name had been familiar to her as of a great menace which had its lodges deep in the wilderness of the West. "The Snakes will catch you!" had been the threat used by her parents when she was disobedient and had wandered off alone into the bush. And the experiences of her later life had given her but too many proofs that the terror of the Snakes was no empty tale. Nor were they feared by Indians alone. In the White Man's settlements they were abhorred with an almost equal dread.

The afternoon passed into evening; the evening began to darken towards night; and the deep orange light of an Indian sunset burned on the eastern pines. And still the enemy gave no sign, and the solemn stillness of the forest remained unbroken in the gathering gloom. Then, suddenly, in the direction of Mount Rising Wolf, a fox barked. The call was taken up a little farther to the north, as if a vixen had replied to her mate. Then, unbroken silence, as before. If hunting was likely to be good or bad along the slopes of Rising Wolf, the fox kindred held their peace.

To Indian ears, the ordinary call of a fox meant very little. But the fact of the frequency of such familiar sounds did not blunt a keenness of hearing which caught the finest shades of tone. And amongst those anxiously listening in the camp for the lightest rustle in the bush,

or whisper on the air, were ears which detected in these particular fox-cries a quality which made them suspicious notes. To Katoya, whose fineness of hearing was beyond even the high Indian average, they were more than merely doubtful. She recognized that, for their utterance, no member of the fox kindred had lifted up his jowl. Her preparations for what was now so swiftly coming, were complete. She would have left the camp earlier but for the certain knowledge that the bush was no longer safe; for although she would have taken the risk for herself alone, she shrank from exposing Thunder Boy to the lurking dangers of the woods. Besides, since her warnings had been effective, and that even Seven Brothers had shown himself fully alive to the approaching peril, there was little fear of the camp being taken by surprise, since its fighting-men were numerous and well-armed. And now that the danger was near—so close upon them, indeed, that one could almost feel its breath behind the first fringes of the bush, she gave her grandson her last instructions as to what he was to do.

Their tepee was one of the outermost on the side of the camp nearest to the river, which, at this point, made a curve which protected it on two sides. In a small bay under the shelving bank, and hidden on the landward side by enormous bunches of coarse grass, the canoes belonging to the tribe were drawn up in a line along the shore. In case the worst happened, Katoya trusted to the water for escape. Under cover of the deepening dusk, she took Thunder Boy down to the bay, and, telling him to lie down under the bank close to their own canoe, and not to move, no matter

what he might hear or see, until she returned, disappeared.

He was by this time far too accustomed to his grandmother's autocratic ways, and sudden disappearances, to wonder at her present behaviour. So, after she had left him, he remained quietly in his hiding-place, to await patiently the course of events. From this position under the bank, the camp was completely hidden from view, but by parting the rushes in front of him, he could look down a long reach of the river, as it curved towards the south. In spite of the dusk, its surface was still luminous with the reflection of the sky. On either bank, the masses of the forest rose like a black cliff. He was not usually timid in the neighbourhood of the trees when the light began to fail; but this evening, the brooding sense of danger which pervaded the camp, and the tense excitement of all within it, gave him a feeling of vague uneasiness as he gazed across the glimmering water to the forest beyond. Nothing escaped him. He saw the faint shadows on the shining surface as the eddies turned. He noted the differences of tone in the darkness of deep water under the banks, from the gloom which was merely the shadow of the overhanging trees. And his ears were equally on the alert. They heard the all but inaudible whisper of the gliding current; the dull plop, plop, of the ripples as they washed the willow-roots on the opposite shore; the far-off chatter of a flock of partridges among the alders, subdued by distance to a liquid gossip hardly distinguishable from the gurgle of water. But these were sounds which might be heard on any windless evening when the air was still. The noises for which Thunder Boy was

listening were dumb in the throats of stealthy moving figures, whose feet, like the river, made only the vaguest wash of sound. Gradually the invisibly thickening dusks of the air deepened into night, and the forest lifted a solid blackness under the fading sky. The gurgling gossip among the alder stems died away into mere occasional spurts of drowsy murmuring, and, except when a fish jumped, or a passing musquash slapped the water with his tail, the intense stillness remained unbroken.

Then, without the slightest warning, a burst of savage yells rent the air with a piercing din. From that moment onwards, the uproar was unceasing. Mingled with the reports of fire-arms, the screams of women and children rose above the war-whoops of the men. To judge from the clamour, it seemed as if fighting were going on at half a dozen different points at once. Thunder Boy lay trembling under the bank. Yet, terrified though he was, it was only his promise to his grandmother which prevented him from rushing back to the tepee to see if she were safe. As the moments passed, his fear increased. The uproar rose and fell in murderous waves that sickened him with dread. And still she did not come. It was very dark now; so dark that nothing was distinguishable in the gloom of the farther bank, and the canoes were merely dark shapes that melted into obscurity farther down the line. Gradually a terrible fear fastened upon him lest his grandmother should not return. Suppose she had been caught before she could escape? Suppose . . . and the awfulness of the thought drove the blood from his heart with a stabbing pain . . . suppose she had been killed?

At last when he felt that the suspense was becoming greater than he could bear, he heard the soft pad, pad, of quickly running feet, and then some one plunged down the bank. She had come, after all !

She called in a low, breathless tone, and he sprang towards her. As he did so, there was a fresh burst of yells and desperate screams, as if a large number of people were rushing towards them.

“ Quick ! ” Katoya cried. “ They come ! ”

Thunder Boy did not need his grandmother’s order. In a frenzy of fear he flung himself on the canoe, and helped her to drag it into the water. The clamour rose to a deepening swell. It seemed as if the heavy folds of the darkness swayed with the roar of sound.

As the first Indians threw themselves down the bank, the shadowy shape of the canoe melted down-river into the darker shadow of the night.

CHAPTER IX

THE WOODEN LODGES

DOWN the river the canoe made rapid way, for the current was with it, and its occupants paddled fast. As the vigorous sweep of the paddles carried it onward, the noise of the fight grew fainter, and at length died completely away. Nevertheless, Katoya kept listening for any sound which should warn her that their enemies were in pursuit. She had waited in the camp as long as she dared, and had only left it when she feared that further delay might be fatal to her plan for saving her grandson, if her people were overpowered. Even now she could not be certain that her flight had not been observed. Left to themselves, she did not think that the Snakes would take the trouble to pursue them. But it was Scar-face she feared—that creature of infinite cunning, and pitiless as the wolves themselves in the empty Hunger-moon.

She did not cease paddling till she had reached a point about half-way along the western shore of the lake, where a grove of Indian willows made a thick cover, under which she ran the canoe. Then, telling Thunder Boy to follow her, she landed, and, after having fastened the canoe, made her way into the bush. All this time he had no idea what plan his grandmother was bent upon carrying out. That she

had a plan, he was certain ; for his past experience had taught him that, however erratic her feet appeared to be, her mind worked always round some fixed idea, which she never gave up till her object was gained. And whatever she did, he knew that his part was to follow without questioning, though they should journey till the Northern Lights danced at the raw edge of the world where the boldest hunter stays his footsteps, and even the caribou turn back.

On they went, and still on, groping blindly along deer-paths and wandering ways that seemed to lead nowhere, and only to land them deeper in the endless maze of the bush. The dog-star rose in the north-east ; and the " Lost Children," as the Indians call the Pleiades, glittered between the tall tops of the pines ; and all the great constellations of the vast northern heavens burned with a throbbing flame. The night deepened round them. Shapeless glooms dogged their footsteps ; low breathings and rustlings in the under-wood made the darkness creep. And still Katoya held upon her way, though what faculty it was which guided her through the lightless wilderness, no one, herself least of all, could say. As well ask the swallow, the golden plover, the loon, by what compass they steer their course from zone to zone along the uncharted wastes of the middle sky. Ask moose and reindeer what instinct guides them across treeless arctic barrens, when they walk the windy roof of the world, where only the wild things walk. Ask the outland creatures and the outland peoples—all who have that strange sense of direction—whence and why it is : and their unfathomable eyes will gaze wonderingly out upon you from the instinctive depth of a million years ; but

will not offer you the vaguest clue to a secret which advancing civilization is already too advanced to know.

The first glimmer of dawn had lightened the tree-tops before Katoya stopped. Though she could see no landmarks, she knew that her journey was nearly ended. She had not told Thunder Boy where they were going. It would be time enough, when they had arrived. She merely waited till they had both rested sufficiently to recover from their night travelling, and then she started once more.

When, soon afterwards, through an opening in the trees, the roofs of a White Man's settlement came in sight, Thunder Boy looked at his grandmother in amazement.

"They are the lodges of the pale-faces," she said in a matter-of-fact tone. "I have brought you to them so that where the pale-faces dwell, you shall dwell also, and grow up to be a great medicine-man among them."

Thunder Boy shook his head.

"I do not wish to grow up in the wooden lodges. I do not like them. They are not good tepees."

"That is only because you have forgotten," Katoya answered calmly. "You have already lived amongst them; and then they were not strange."

"I have never lived in *those*," he replied sturdily. "They have no lodge-poles. And how will they put them into the canoes?"

"The pale-faces do not travel with their lodges," his grandmother answered. "When they travel, the lodges remain where they are till they return."

"But when they go a long journey, and do not mean to return, will they not roll them up then?"

"The lodges of the pale-faces do not roll up. They are made to sit fast upon the ground for ever."

"I will not live in a lodge that will not roll up," Thunder Boy said, with increasing determination.

Katoya looked at him with surprise. She had never before heard him speak with such resolute firmness about anything which he did not wish to do.

"It is necessary that you should live among the pale-faces for a time," she said sternly. "It is only among them that you can be safe, for they are cunning and very strong."

Thunder Boy returned his grandmother's look with astonishment. The expression on her face filled him with uneasiness; it was that, quite as much as her actual words, which convinced him that what she had said was true. There was no use in contradicting her when she looked like that. It was the medicine-power in her which made it possible to shoot things at you through her eyes. More than one famous warrior had met that look and quailed.

"Come," she said, as she turned her face again towards the lodges. "It is time for us to go."

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The settlement had not long been up and stirring, and had hardly got the sleep rubbed well out of its eyes, when it beheld a vision which might well induce it to rub them again, to be quite sure that the night had not mislaid a dream or two when it struck its tepee, and vanished into the West. It saw, or fancied it saw, an ancient squaw and a young lad, Indian to the soles of their moccasins, emerge from the edge of the forest, and advance slowly with that supple-sinewed gait

which is so typical of redskin movement in the breathless silence of the woods.

The news of their arrival spread rapidly. Unfortunately for the visitors, the simple word "Indian" had become a term of suspicion in outlying settlements, where the scanty populations lived in perpetual dread of a redskin rising, and where the murder of a single trapper would be more than sufficient to set the entire country in a blaze. So they were soon the centre of an excited and curious group of men and women who subjected every detail of their appearance to the closest inspection. In spite of the fact that the squaw was so evidently old, she undoubtedly was durable with the leathery toughness of those whose bodies seem to remain stationary, defying the run of the years. And although she was little above the average height, she bore herself with a dignity which forcibly struck all who saw her, wherever she appeared. So now, even before she had spoken a word to explain her coming, it was felt that she was a person of sufficient importance to hear what she might have to say, before driving her off. Thunder Boy also excited a good deal of remark; for although the cast of his features had a definite Indian character, there was a decided touch of the pale-face about him, which, coupled with the lighter colour of his skin, did not escape the more observant in the crowd. And apart from all this, both members of this peculiar pair were enveloped in that darkly Indian atmosphere of secret places and secret things which brought into the matter-of-fact American settlement a sense of that shadowy other world whose activities are half suspected by the White Man in the mystery of the great woods.

During this examination, Katoya's piercing glance passed swiftly from face to face about her, as if she were seeking some one to address.

"What eyes!" a woman whispered. "They just go through and through you, enough to make your flesh creep!"

"Indian eyes," her neighbour answered. "The redskins use 'em to save their tongues. That's their craftiness. Look how she's marked out Ezer Kennedy with 'em! I guess she's goin' to try an' pow-wow with *him*."

"She'll be a clever one to get the better of ole Ezer," a third woman remarked. "*He* wasn't bred back east for nothin'!"

While all this was going on, Thunder Boy, like his grandmother, was busy with his eyes. What *were* these odd people, he wondered, who looked as if they had been snowed-under, blizzard after blizzard, and had never afterwards got their faces back to the right depth of colour when the spring thaw sent in? And their clothes were as colourless as their faces, without a single bead or porcupine quill to set them off. He, also, looked into their faces searchingly, as if to surprise some part of the mysterious pale-face mind, lurking in these inquisitive eyes which seemed as if they would like to burn holes in his flesh. Yet whatever the mind was, it eluded him, like a beast in the shade of the bush. But there was one face, to which, wherever his glance wandered, it always returned. That heavy countenance, with its square jowl, black with a week-old growth of beard;—those full lips, of a blotched purple, hanging apart and showing the teeth;—those prominent fish-grey eyes, with a glint

of a polished stone, under the bushy brows ;—here was a face which caused its owner to stand out from the rest of the company as a person to be observed. Thunder Boy looked all the more intently since it was evident that his grandmother had also marked out this important-looking individual as one to whom she was about to speak. He wondered intensely what she was going to say. He was certain that it must give him some clue to this unexplained journey to the place of wooden lodges which could not be rolled up, nor taken away. . . . Ah ! now she was beginning ! He listened with an excited sense of something vastly important about to be disclosed. What was she saying ? Was she making medicine, or telling a curious tale he could not understand ? The fact that she could make sounds with her tongue which were not Indian sounds, and which seemed to convey a meaning he was utterly unable to grasp, made him thoroughly uncomfortable. It was as if a moose cow should cry to her calf with the water voice of the loon.

He looked anxiously at the face of the person she was addressing to watch the effect of her words. But the heavy features remained as expressionless as if they were in cedar-bark. Suddenly, he saw the man's eyes leave his grandmother's face and fasten intently on his own. Katoya had ceased medicine-making in the strange tongue. She was watching keenly to try to detect what effect her words had produced.

Whatever Ezer Kennedy felt, he was not the sort of man to allow his sentiments to leak feebly out of his face like water from a bucket with a hole ; but with a few signs and gruff words he let Katoya understand that it was his intention to finish the interview where

they ran no risk of being overheard. He led the way to a cabin on the farther side of the clearing ; and, seeing that his grandmother followed him, Thunder Boy did the same.

When they had reached the cabin, and he saw her disappear through the doorway after Kennedy, he was seized with misgiving. The wooden lodge filled him with dread. Beyond its entrance the dark interior looked like a cave. He distrusted caves. Before he could be induced to enter one, he always examined the ground outside with the greatest care. If it was much trodden, and gave other evidences of occupation, he avoided it as being certainly the home of one of the larger hunting beasts. He was not afraid of the beasts in the open ways of the forest where all the trails were free ; but a trail that led to a den door was a path of danger ; which offered every likelihood of being welcomed by the choking embrace of a grizzly or the deadly jaw of a wolf-mother with a litter of new-born cubs. And now he was confronted by a new sort of cave, to which the ground outside, beaten down though it was, gave no clue, by feather, bone or refuse, to the sort of creature that housed therein. At first he stopped a dozen paces off, watching and listening intently ; but though he could hear the sound of his grandmother's voice, and that of the stranger, at intervals, he was not near enough to distinguish the words that were being said. Gradually, as nothing came to the door to alarm him, he crept closer up, listening suspiciously to the low murmur of voices, and wondering what would happen next, while all the time he kept a wary eye on the settlement to see if anyone approached.

When Katoya entered the cabin, it was not her first

experience of a White Man's dwelling. Many, many moons had gone by since first the all-conquering pale-faces had first come into her life. Once, when she had lain very ill, and her vision of the Wolf-trail had glowed so clear along the sky that she had almost felt her moc-casins beginning to do their part in wearing it white, one of the black-robcs (the pale-face medicine-men) had given her strange healing, and had postponed her treading of the trail for close on forty years. After that, there was always a soft corner in her heart for the pale-faces, in spite of her clear perception that their ways were not always to the advantage of her people, and that they could pursue very crooked purposes with the straight barrels of their guns. So, as she came into the cabin, the old far-off times gathered about her with their shapes, colours, and smells. She felt herself in the White Man's circle once more ; and as she took a rapid survey of the interior, noting the once-familiar peculiarities of furnishing, she felt the shadow of his wooden walls darken round her life.

Kennedy was the first to speak.

"How do I know that it is the same child that was stolen?" he asked roughly, jerking his thumb in the boy's direction.

A flicker of anger gleamed in Katoya's deep eyes, and was gone. It failed to flaw the level tone of her monotonous voice, as she replied :

"You see him. . . . His father."

Kennedy caught her meaning.

"*Father!*" he echoed scornfully. "As much like the mother as the cub is like the wolf."

"Father wolf, also," Katoya retorted.

Kennedy frowned.

"No Indians wanted round here, anyhow," he growled. "Plenty Indians. Plenty wolves. No good. No good."

He muttered another remark in Indian which was a low insult.

Again, the flicker in Katoya's eyes came and went, but she answered calmly :

"I bring him you . . . he safe here till his father come back."

Kennedy gave her a quick look.

"His father died ! Indians *kill* him !" he said with violent emphasis.

Katoya shook her head.

"Not kill. Take alive. White man go with Indians long trail west."

"I tell you he *was* killed !" Kennedy burst out fiercely. "The Snakes killed him in the big fight."

Again Katoya shook her head with obstinate denial.

"I *know* !" was all she said.

She uttered the two words with such conviction that Kennedy was plainly uneasy. He had only too readily believed in his brother's death. He wanted him to be well killed, and to remain dead. Otherwise he could never feel himself secure in his ownership of the small property his brother had left, and go on doing what he liked with it without risk of interference. It did not by any means suit his purposes to learn that he was possibly so little dead that he might at any time reappear in the flesh to claim his rights. And, if, as the old squaw declared, this Indian boy was indeed his brother's child, which he was extremely reluctant to believe, there was an additional reason for keeping the matter as dark as possible. He detested Katoya.

He abominated the child. As for his brother not being dead, the idea revolted his very soul. If only he could cajole or frighten the old woman into taking the child away again, they might fall a victim to their enemies, and the unwelcome secret might die with them. He determined to do what he could.

Katoya listened patiently to his words, and remained quite unmoved. But when, finding persuasion was useless, he began to threaten, her anger rose. Pale-face though he was, and a member of a conquering race, he was after all an interloper in those lands where her ancestors had been lords of the woods and waters since the Thunder-bird first clapped his wings. Yet, for the sake of the boy, she kept her anger in check. Nevertheless, when she spoke again, it was plain to Kennedy that her mood had changed.

"I go back," she said. "But not *him*. If you not keep him, I leave him with others."

At the mention of "others" Kennedy's mood also changed. The last thing he wished was that the rest of the settlement should know what she had told him. And, with her alarming faculty for reading the minds about her, Katoya had seized upon the fact. From that moment, she knew that the peace of mind of this arrogant White Man was at her mercy. She wasted no more words, and turned to go. Kennedy barred the doorway by quickly placing his bulky person in front of it.

Drawing herself to her full height, Katoya looked straight into his eyes. In that one look, Kennedy "read the stars."

What he had only dimly felt before, he now knew for a certainty. In this old Indian woman, the faded

representation of a half-conquered and yet dreaded race, he found himself in the presence of a personality and a power greater than his own, whose very mystery and vagueness lent it a peculiar awe.

"If you say nothing to *them*," he said, pointing to the door to indicate the rest of the settlement, "I keep the boy. It is good they think his father dead. But if you tell, I do *not* keep him. I tell them you say a lie."

Katoya bowed her head. She did not care what anyone said or did not say, so long as they served the great purpose she had in view. If she could purchase her grandson's safety, merely by keeping silence, she would be dumb to the end of her life. If his father ever returned to claim him, the secret Kennedy dreaded would disclose itself. In either event, the future would decide.

But there was one other condition which Kennedy imposed. She must promise that, having said good-bye to her grandson, she would not linger in the neighbourhood, but disappear for good into the wilderness out of which she had so suddenly appeared.

Again Katoya bowed. This second condition was a far harder one than the first. Her grandson was the pride of her life. It was difficult enough to be obliged to hand him over to the care of strangers, even though they were his father's people; but to leave him alone without ever seeing him, going out of his sight as if for ever, was a thing so terribly bitter that it almost broke her heart. Yet her heart was truly Indian; full and deep as the great rivers of her land; weathered into strength like the twisted tamaracs that defied the thunderbolt, and bent but did not break

before the storm. Passionately as she desired that her grandson should remain Indian to the core, she had worldly wisdom enough to realize that his future welfare depended largely on his relations with the White kindred of his father. The pale-faces might be usurpers and interlopers, but they had come to stay. They were too strong and had made too good their footing, ever to be expelled. If a single settlement should be wiped out, it meant that a terrible vengeance would fall upon her race, and a new settlement would spring up to fill the place of the old. Her penetrating vision, striking deep into the future, saw that unless her grandson made himself master of the White Man's "medicine," his chances of a secure existence would be few indeed. Without another word to Kennedy, she left the cabin and went to the spot where Thunder Boy was still waiting.

When he saw his grandmother reappear unhurt from the wooden lodge, he was immensely relieved in his mind. Now that her mysterious business, whatever it was, was finished, they could go back at once to the forest, and leave the White Man's suspicious dwellings far behind. But when, to his consternation and surprise, Katoya explained in a few short sentences, what she had just arranged, he was at no pains to conceal his complete disapproval of the plan. At first he obstinately declared that nothing short of a tomahawk at his head would induce him to remain ; and it was only after his grandmother had insisted that not only his own safety, but probably her life as well, depended upon his yielding, that he reluctantly gave his promise to carry out her wishes. Her parting words were characteristic :

"I take a trail which you must not follow. I go beyond the reach of your eyes and the call of your voice. But if you are in trouble, you shall send a message to Katoya : you shall shoot your mind towards her across the spaces of the trees. And she will answer. Katoya will come to you though her enemies should lie in her path, as the leaves lie thick in the Fall. Do not carry a coward heart before the White Man. Show him that an Indian is not afraid of a pale-face. And remember this always : when you have learnt the White Man's medicine, Katoya will come again."

When she had finished speaking, she took him in her arms in a close embrace, then, holding him from her, with her hands upon his shoulders, gave him a long look. And in that deep and piercing gaze, even more than in the passionate words she had just uttered, Thunder Boy read his grandmother's mind. He felt it filling him with a strange power, as if some of her own force of will were strengthening his own, to nerve him for the ordeal he was about to face. He returned her gaze with one which never faltered. It was the true "brave" that looked up at her out of the troubled boyish eyes. The great Indian soul within her swelled with pride, as she felt that her grandson would not prove himself inferior to the best traditions of her race. Then, without another word, she turned and walked slowly towards the forest. Once only she looked back. At the extreme edge of the clearing, where the bleached stumps stood like grey watchers against the darkness of the bush, her upright figure was seen to stand for a minute as motionless as they. Then it glided in between them and was gone.

CHAPTER X

THE UNCLE KENNEDY

THUNDER BOY was still gazing at the spot where his grandmother had disappeared when a voice shouted from behind. His instinct told him that it was calling to him ; yet he pretended he did not know. It was harsh and dominating—a voice to be obeyed. To the boy's ears it was not so much the call of a single individual as the summons of the settlement itself : it was all those strange, unwelcome things included in the term “ pale-face ” and rolled into a sound. It thrilled him with a throb of terrible loneliness that seemed to beat low down in his stomach. But he would not allow that he was also afraid. In a first encounter with pale-faces, that would never do. He kept his eyes fixed upon the forest as if nothing was happening. The call came again. This time there was an unmistakable note of anger in it. Still he would not look round. He remained as he was, without seeming to pay the least attention. The shout was not repeated. Instead, he heard footsteps approaching. At the sound of something coming upon him from behind, the instinct of wild things in him was too strong. He turned quickly round.

The face that lowered blackly upon him a few paces away did not set him at his ease. He had guessed rightly that it would be that of the man with whom

his grandmother had just been speaking. Kennedy put out his hand to seize him. Quick as a weasel, Thunder Boy darted aside. Kennedy made a lunge forward with an explosive noise in his mouth. The explosion being part of the pale-face vocabulary, meant nothing more to the boy than the snarl of a wolf. But it meant as much. It was a danger signal. It signified "Look out!" Thunder Boy *looked* out—and leaped.

Ezer Kennedy might not be gifted with the very quickest of wits; but he was not as slow-witted as not to realize that he might as well try to catch a half-grown wolf-cub by such methods, as this agile young redskin. So he gave up trying to do the impossible and contented himself by pointing towards the cabin and growling angrily: "Get in there!"

The words conveyed nothing. The gesture was plain enough. Thunder Boy had no inclination to obey, since he still regarded the cabin with the greatest suspicion. For all that, his grandmother had made it perfectly clear to him that he was to stay with this strange person for a time; and in spite of his abhorrence of the plan, he had enough common sense to know that what she wished must be the wisest plan to follow. So with a wary eye on Kennedy, in case he should try to catch him again, he moved slowly in the direction of the cabin, keeping a few paces behind all the time as a precaution. But when Kennedy reached the door and stood at one side of it, making signs to him to enter, Thunder Boy doggedly refused to stir an inch farther. In vain Kennedy exhausted all his arts of persuasion, such as they were, to induce him to approach. The boy remained where he was, observing him suspiciously with the gaze of an animal who scents

a trap. And it was only when Kennedy had entered the cabin, that he approached it slowly, step by step, and at last ventured to peer cautiously in. What he saw did not give him confidence. The four straight walls, with foreign-looking objects hanging on them here and there, filled him with awe. The only wall he was accustomed to was one which sloped to an opening among smoke-blackened lodge-poles and went all round. Wide at the bottom; narrow at the top: *that* was the shape for a home! Four straight walls, with corners to them, were no home: they were a trap and a prison constructed cunningly in one. If this was the *outside* of the medicine his grandmother wished him to learn, then he did not like the look of it: it had the look of medicine that was bad. Yet because his grandmother *had* wished it, and certainly not because of any confidence in Kennedy, he edged himself through the doorway warily, an inch or two at a time. Then, standing close to the wall between the window and door, he took in his strange surroundings with eyes which at the same time never allowed Kennedy to slip out of their view. Kennedy, meanwhile, wisely pretended not to take any notice, and busied himself in lighting the stove in order to cook his supper.

The stove was the only thing in the cabin which Thunder Boy might be expected not to find strange. And when the wood, after the first crackling and hissing, began to send a glow between the bars, Thunder Boy looked and listened as if some obscure memory stirring within him, glowed into a prehistoric sugar-box ten thousand moons ago. Yet if the recollection floated thinly, it brought him no comfort, and he was

distracted from the noises of the stove by a thing which gibbered upon the opposite wall. It was round, with a white face like the moon, and was painted with black strokes. And underneath was a tail with a blob on the end which wagged to and fro. He watched it intently lest it should climb down the wall and bite. For although its voice was low, and it had no visible mouth, it had all the air of a creature who could do you an ill turn with a mouth that was out of sight. Here, if anywhere, the White Man's medicine rested, high up on the wall ! Thunder Boy regarded it with a fearful eye.

When Kennedy had finished his cooking, he put some of the meat he had been preparing on a plate, and set it on the edge of the table nearest to the boy, making it plain to him by signs that he was expected to eat. Thunder Boy was hungry. The food had a tempting look. The smell also tickled his nose. But he felt that if he put the pale-face food into his mouth, he would place himself deliberately in the White Man's power. Yet the medicine-men of his tribe had taught him also that if you eat the body of a thing, its strength, or medicine power, entered into you and gave you the force or cunning which it had possessed when alive. He did not wish to live the life of the pale-faces, yet he did not object to eat their cunning. And besides all this, there was the old law of Hunger which is the oldest law in the world. So, with a suspicious eye on Kennedy, he sidled up to the table, and snatched a piece of meat. Then, returning to his post by the door, he tasted it carefully. The taste was peculiar, but not unpleasant, though not to be compared with the flavour of sarvis-berry stew. While he ate, he

watched uneasily to see if the sight and smell of the food would entice the round-faced animal to climb down the wall. Yet, though it went on talking to itself and wagging its tail, it never moved an inch.

When he had finished, Kennedy put the supper things away, and then threw some blankets down in the corner farthest from the stove. After pointing to these, and making Thunder Boy understand that this was to be his bed, he sat down opposite the stove and began to smoke, paying as little attention to the boy as if he were not there. Then, after a long time had elapsed, he knocked the ashes out of his pipe, undressed slowly, extinguished the lamp, and got into his own bed on the other side of the room.

During all this time Thunder Boy had not moved from his position by the door, which Kennedy had not attempted to shut; and it was not long before the sound of heavy breathing in the corner satisfied the boy that the dreaded pale-face was asleep. *And the door was open!* He stepped to it softly and looked out. In the starlight he could make out the dark shapes of the other wooden lodges, and beyond, in a circling wall, the still blacker mass of the bush. The bush beckoned him—drew him with a mighty drawing. Somewhere in its dark depths was his grandmother's camp, and, at the heart of its black silences, his home. Its pull upon his heart-strings was all but irresistible. Nothing but his devotion to Katoya could have held him to his promise. Yet resolutely, though with a heavy reluctance, he turned his back on the starlit blackness, and lay down on the blankets in the corner of the room.

The settlement was very still. The only audible

sounds were those inside the cabin : the ticking of the clock ; the deep breathing of Kennedy ; and small, uncertain noises that came now and then from the stove. These stove noises, as the embers fell together, and the iron contracted and clicked, fell almost as unfamiliarly on his ears as the ticking of the clock, so much so that he would have been greatly astonished if anyone had told him that, in his infancy, he had once regarded them as vastly companionable things. Then stove, clock, pale-face, and settlement ceased to exist for him, and he was far along the dream-trail in the hunting-lands of sleep. He was so far along it that he never heard the heavy breathing cease as Kennedy got out of bed and softly fastened the door.

Next morning he awoke to find himself a prisoner ; and when, after getting his breakfast, Kennedy went out, he locked the door behind him, leaving the boy to the companionship of the stove and the clock. He was not afraid of the stove, but the clock continued to fill him with uncomfortable awe. The strange life it had inside it was a mystery he could not fathom. He could not stir but he was followed by the gaze of its large mouthless face spying continually upon his movements, as it went on tirelessly making its evil medicine high up on the wooden wall.

Kennedy did not return until the middle of the day. When he entered the cabin, and saw the food he had left behind on the table still untouched, he pointed to it, and said something in a harsh voice. Thunder Boy no more understood the words than the medicine-making of the clock, but, like the clock, they made him uncomfortable. Kennedy took his meal, and

again Thunder Boy would not eat. He kept looking at the door. Kennedy did not speak again; he seemed to be pondering something. To Thunder Boy's surprise and intense relief, when he went out after finishing his food, he left the door wide open.

As soon as he thought the pale-face was out of sight, he went out. Not far from the cabin, to the right, was a clump of old pine-stubs. He got in amongst them and looked round at the settlement. Not many of the fearful pale-faces were to be seen. Those who were about did not seem to be doing anything particular. Thunder Boy, from his shelter of stubs, looked at them with intense curiosity; but when anyone passed near his hiding-place, he crouched low and hardly dared to breathe.

The afternoon went on. Evening came, and with it, Kennedy. Thunder Boy saw him go into the cabin, and then come back to the doorway, and look about in all directions. He dreaded lest he should make him out among the pine-stubs, and was immensely relieved when he saw him go back again into the cabin.

Twilight fell, and it was night. Light shone from the cabin, for Kennedy had lighted the lamp. The boy could hear the sounds he made as he prepared his supper, and see his shadow as he passed to and fro in front of the light. Then a whiff of something tickled his nose. He sniffed inquisitively, and got another sniff, as the night air carried the scent towards him. It was coming from the cabin. There was no mistaking it—the appetizing smell of the pale-face food. He had eaten nothing since the evening before, and now realized that he was very hungry. He disliked the thought of entering the cabin again; but

his nose was traitor to his will, and he felt himself drawn, in spite of everything, towards the enticing smell.

When Kennedy saw the little copper-coloured face peering in at him with large eyes from the doorway, his grim mouth worked with something approaching a smile. He said not a word. He just put some meat on a plate, and, as on the previous occasion, set it on the table at the end nearest to the door. The meat had gravy about it, and sent up a steam. He pretended he did not see Thunder Boy edge slowly towards it, nor how he suddenly grabbed the meat, eating it ravenously, and then licked up the gravy with his tongue.

That was how Thunder Boy's taming began. Kennedy was not slow to profit by the knowledge he had gained, and when force was not convenient, arrived at his ends by food.

The days went by, and slid into weeks. Gradually the boy grew used to the new life. He hated it all: he detested Kennedy; but he bore up patiently, waiting for the day when his grandmother would come, as she had promised, and take him away. Only as the time passed, and she gave no sign of her whereabouts, he began to grow more and more uneasy. And, meanwhile, Kennedy's treatment of him did not improve. If he hated the tyrannous pale-face, Kennedy, on his side, had no love for him. He would have turned him out and told him to go back where he came from, but he feared to risk public opinion, and what the settlement would say now that every one knew that Katoya had restored the boy to his own people. Besides, there was always Katoya herself to be reckoned

with. If what she said was true, and the boy's father was not dead, she might get her story believed. The condition on which she held her tongue was that he should go on keeping his nephew.

Now that Thunder Boy began to grow used to the pale-faces, and their habits, he found that they were not so terrible as he had supposed. He shrank from the staring eyes as long as they appeared to regard him as if he were a wild animal in the process of being tamed ; but with the solitary exception of his uncle, no one seemed to bear him any ill will. One or two were even inclined to be kind to him, and the children made friendly advances. To these offers of friendship he responded as well as he knew how. The wild Indian blood in him, which made him such a strange thing to these little backwoods people, did not prevent his boyish nature from expanding under the influence of theirs. For, though the ancient laws of Hunger and Fear still held sway since the good old days when the last Mastodon pushed his enemy into the antediluvian slime with his prehistoric tusks, it was the children, red or white, black or yellow, who kept Love and Fellowship alive and nimble along the world ; since it could so safely be left to the wisdom of grown-up persons to nourish Division and Hate.

CHAPTER XI

KATOYA'S WARNING

ONE morning, very early, about a month after Thunder Boy's arrival, just as the first streaks of dawn began to lighten to the east, a figure stood quietly beside the pile of fence-poles propped against a maple growing at the far end of the clearing. From this point Kennedy's cabin was plainly in view. Yet although the watchful eyes never left it or its immediate surroundings for more than a moment or two at a time, what they had specially come to see, remained out of sight. As the dusk thinned, and the settlement began to give signs of waking, the figure melted into the bush and mingled with the shades of the vanishing night. And although, when the sun rose, the entire clearing was so brightly illuminated that the most insignificant objects stood out plainly in sparkling light, no trace of the visitor remained beyond a blurred trail in the dew. Notwithstanding this, the shadowy gloom of a big hemlock to the north-east had eyes within it; and totally unconscious though the settlement was of them, it was watched.

On the afternoon of the same day, Kennedy was returning home from cutting some more fence-poles, when he became suddenly aware of some person moving amongst the trees in the same direction as himself. The light was so dim among the undergrowth that

he could not make out who it was; and it was not until the trails began to converge that he recognized Katoya. He was angry at once. She had promised not to come near the settlement; and just when he begun to congratulate himself upon having got rid of her for good, she was on the scene again as unexpectedly as she had appeared the first time. When the trail she was following joined the lumber track, he asked her roughly what she meant by breaking her promise.

"It is a little reason," Katoya replied firmly, giving Kennedy one of her intense looks. "The Snakes are on the warpath. Their tomahawks will be with the pale-faces before the moon ends."

"Oh, you and your Snakes!" Kennedy said, with a sneer. "You said they would come the last time. They haven't come yet!"

"No?" Katoya said calmly. "But wait. Last time, *my* people. We were many. Now we are not many. My people have fled far southward, to escape. I not know the trail."

"Good job, too!" Kennedy retorted. "Country's well rid of 'em. Too many redskins. Too few whites. See?"

"More few pale-faces after Snakes come!" Katoya said with marked emphasis. "My people not here to kill *now*. Pale-faces this time, instead. Snakes get scalps anyhow."

"Then let 'em get 'em from their redskin brothers. Plenty more good scalps to be had. They'd better not come tomahawking here, or they'll get a lesson."

"If Snakes know I give warning to pale-faces, they kill me," Katoya said gravely.

The words "Couldn't do better!" were on the tip

of Kennedy's tongue. Yet he did not say them. He did not know why. Certainly he was not hampered by any desire to be polite. Courtesy to a redskin was not a thing Kennedy could understand. You might as well waste fine manners on a rattlesnake or a grizzly bear. Yet there was that about Katoya which commanded respect, even if you did not wish to pay it. An atmosphere of something intense and dignified clung to the old squaw as if she—a daughter of the waste places and the lonely waters—drew her wild blood from an unbroken line of ancient forest kings.

"Now, you've given your precious warning, you can go back!" he said, pointing to the path down which she had come.

The squaw looked him straight in the eyes without replying. Whatever direction it suited her to take, she was not going to bandy words with a pale-face interloper in the lands where her ancestors had pitched their tepees for a hundred thousand moons.

Kennedy resented the look. It conveyed too much of that withering scorn of him and his commands which the Indian woman refrained from putting into speech.

"Back!" he repeated in his hard, rasping voice. "Get back where you came from! And, what's more, don't dare to show your beastly face here again!"

Katoya kept her eyes steadily fixed upon him, and did not move an inch. Only an expression gathered in her face which suggested a thunder-cloud whose lightnings lay in ambush. Under that lowering blackness, Kennedy grew uneasy, in spite of himself. Once more, as at their first interview, he recognized in this

ancient squaw the presence of some secret power which he could not comprehend.

The settlement was not yet in sight. The light was beginning to fail. All around them, for countless leagues, stretched the interminable ranks of the gloomy northern trees. Kennedy was neither a nervous nor an imaginative man; but in those lonely backwoods there come at times, to all those who go much abroad, without warning, and without visible cause, strange visitations which besiege even the hardest minds. One of these experiences was upon Kennedy now. And the feeling was undoubtedly concentrated in the Indian woman confronting him with her unflinching stare. They were alone. The bush darkened moment by moment. It seemed almost as if she were in league with invisible things that were hidden among the trees. It was made quite plain to him that she had no intention of stirring from the spot until she chose to do so of her own free will. Nothing short of physical violence would make her go, and bully though he was, Kennedy did not care to venture upon that. With a curse, he turned on his heel and walked away.

As he went, he considered. Suppose, after all, that what the woman had said was true? If the Snakes were indeed upon the warpath, it might mean the beginning of a general Indian rising. In those days, the limits of the White Man's settlements and of the Indian territory were ill-defined along a primeval wilderness where geography as an applied science was largely a matter of trails. The Wolf River Settlement which Thunder Boy's father had helped to found fifteen years before, was still regarded as a frontier post, isolated from the eastern settlements by a broad belt

of bush. Its position as regarded the white settlements east, was that of a distant island off the coast of the mainland. Round it the tides of the wilderness ebbed and flowed in a terrific silence which seemed at times as if it must finally extinguish the thin murmurs of gossip which simmered over the fires. Of all this Kennedy was only too well aware ; but fifteen years of frontier life had stiffened his will and deadened his heart. Only when some rumour circulated that the flood threatened to gather into a tidal wave, and submerge the little handful of settlers for ever, did an unholy fear stir in his bones and start him cursing every redskin from Alaska to Panama.

Did the Indian woman really know? That was the question which kept revolving in his brain as he followed the track home. His first impression had been that her message of warning had been merely an excuse to learn tidings of her grandson. Yet if so, it was odd that she had made no inquiries about him. The more he thought of it, the more unaccountable it seemed, unless it were her cunning way of pursuing some deep-laid scheme to get the boy under her care again. He had not wanted the boy when she first brought him ; but now that he had got him and could make him useful, he was unwilling to let him go. To have his nephew in his power pleased him, since it gave him the opportunity of gratifying his jealousy of his brother—and hatred of the Indians generally—by oppressing his half-breed son, and making him wince beneath the white man's yoke. The end of his meditations on reaching the settlement resulted in a resolve to keep a sharp look out on the boy's doings, and to curtail his freedom as much as possible.

After having contemptuously watched Kennedy out of sight, Katoya remained for some time at the spot where they had parted, deep in thought. She had delivered her message at the greatest risk to herself, should her enemies get wind of it, and had been insulted for her pains. If, having refused to profit by her warning, the pale-faces were attacked unawares, their blood would be upon their own heads. Yet if any harm befell her grandson through their folly, she knew she could never forgive them. Yet perhaps, after all, the Snakes might not attack. In any case, for the time being, the boy was safer where he was than anywhere else. She would keep her senses open to any tokens of threatening danger, which should come to her from her secret sources of information ; and whether the White Man prepared himself, or the Red Man plotted, she would watch !

CHAPTER XII

WHEN THUNDER BOY WENT MAD

FOR a reason totally unexplained, Thunder Boy found that his uncle's treatment of him grew steadily worse. He received definite orders not to leave the settlement. The forest, even the outer edges of the clearing—a sort of no-man's land of stumps and rough pasture—became out of bounds. Even his movements in and out of the cabin were restricted to definite employments, such as carrying water, chopping wood, or doing any odd job, as he was ordered. Not a day passed without his uncle cursing him for what he had either done or not done ; and more often than not, a kick or a blow accompanied the curse. It became painfully evident to him that Kennedy invented excuses for the sheer pleasure of tyranny.

At last there came a day when he felt that the end of his endurance was rapidly drawing near. He had received a sound thrashing that morning for something Kennedy had quite wrongfully accused him of doing, and now, at the close of the day, every bone in his body seemed to be a separate ache from the blows and kicks which had been rained upon him. He sat outside the cabin, with his back against the logs, too tired and dispirited to do anything but stare miserably into the distance. He felt terribly homesick. An irresistible longing for the old free life with his Indian kin came

over him : the cheerful camp, where, under apparent sluggishness, something was always happening, or about to happen ; the fishing and swimming with Running Wolf ; the shadowy trails in the forest, haunted by furtive feet ; above all, his grandmother's tepee with its strangely painted images, under which, in the long nights of the winter, she had told him the great legends of the tribe, and the stormy glories of his fighting forbears in the far-off times. If only he could return to that, and forget all this hideous nightmare among the wooden lodges, where, if anyone was kind to him, it only seemed to rouse his uncle to more ill-treatment ! If only . . . ! What was *that* ? To the right ; at the south end of the clearing, where his eyes had been resting with the vacant stare ?

It was growing dusk now under the trees, for the sun had sunk behind the huge wall of the forest, and the clearing lay in shadow ; yet Thunder Boy was sure that his eyes had not deceived him, and that he had seen his grandmother moving between the trees. He gave a quick glance all round. Nobody was watching him. His uncle had gone away since dinner-time, and had not returned. He determined to take the risk of being caught. Getting up and passing quickly to the end of the cabin, he made his way towards the point where he had seen her move. When he had reached it, he saw to his joy that he had not been mistaken. His grandmother was waiting for him under the boughs of a hemlock.

"Not yet," Katoya said, when, after pouring forth his troubles to her, he implored her to take him away from the hated pale-faces, nevermore to return. "Remain with them a little longer, a very little longer.

Even if they are not kind to you, they do not kill you. And there are those who would kill you if they found us alone upon the trails. When the trails are safe to travel, I will come again. Be patient a little while, and go on learning the White Man's medicine."

"The White Man's medicine is to beat," he replied quickly. "I am sore with his medicine. See!"

He showed his grandmother a large bruise on his arm.

As she looked at the injured place, Katoya's eyes kindled.

"Good!" she said. "That is very good. That will teach you to be brave, and to be hard as skookum wood. A day will come when the White Man will not dare to beat you any more. You will be a great medicine-man then with his own medicine, and he will be afraid. Show him that an Indian boy is not a coward, and that he has learnt in a great camp how to bear pain."

"I learn many things from the pale-faces," Thunder Boy said proudly. "I can speak some of their tongue already. But it is difficult to understand what they say to each other when they think they are alone."

"That is what you must try to understand. What they say when they are alone is what matters. The White Man has one speech for himself, and another for the Indian. Always try to learn the speech which the White Man keeps for himself."

After that Katoya told him of her camp by the great lake, where she was waiting till the time should come to take him away. It grew darker under the hemlock; so dark that at last they could not see the expression on each other's faces. But it was a good darkness to

Thunder Boy in which he could feel his grandmother's presence, and he would willingly have stayed there the entire night, if only she would not go. Only she had one of her secret journeys to take, and so, whispering to him that it would not be long before she came again, she left him abruptly, and disappeared so quietly that it seemed as if she had melted into the gloom.

A week passed, and yet another. Thunder Boy, with his eyes continually searching the forest, never caught a glimpse of the well-known figure, lurking amongst the trees. Kennedy's treatment of him continued to be abominable. The boy bore it as bravely as he could, remembering his grandmother's words. She had promised to come soon. Yet the moon was drawing to a close, and still she gave no sign. Then, one evening, at about the same time as her previous visit, he saw a form which he was certain was hers stoop under the hemlock. A second figure, standing motionless in shadow fifty paces to the north of the tree, escaped him.

Luck seemed to favour him again, so that he reached the hemlock without apparently attracting notice. As he entered the shade of the tree, his heart was beating with the excitement of hope! Now, surely his grandmother was about to fulfil her promise!

As if she had divined what was in his thought, she spoke the moment he came.

"Not to-night. In six days the moon will be full. When the moon rises on the sixth day, I shall be here. Then we will take the trail."

He was terribly disappointed, but he knew it was useless to argue. Only he would have liked to talk a little: anything to hear the good guttural Indian

tongue which meant so much to him now that the only words he heard day after day were the pale-faces' hissing chatter, which ran between their teeth so fast it was almost impossible for his understanding to keep pace. But Katoya showed plainly that she did not wish to stay, and even while she spoke kept looking about uneasily, as if at any moment they might be observed. Her anxiety was so marked, that he began to be nervous also, in case some one from the settlement should come upon them unawares : so, in spite of his reluctance to let his grandmother go, he had a feeling of relief when she left him, and he saw her vanish among the trees.

And while the short interview lasted, the other watching figure under the sycamore had not betrayed its presence by the slightest movement.

Thunder Boy waited a little after his grandmother had gone. His vague uneasiness made him want to be sure that she had got clear of the neighbourhood without being discovered. Then, when he thought all danger was over, he stepped out from under his hiding-place, and made his way cautiously back to the cabin. He was filled with dread lest he should find his uncle there before him, and was greatly relieved to find that the place was still empty. When he had assured himself that all was well, he squatted down outside the door in his former position.

"Get in!" The words were followed by a brutal kick. Kennedy was upon him so quickly, coming quietly round the cabin from the back, that there was no time to escape. Thunder Boy gasped with pain, but did not cry out. He did not dare to do anything but obey the order immediately.

Once inside Kennedy shut the door and fastened it. Then lit the candle stuck in the neck of an empty whisky-bottle which, when coal-oil ran short, did duty for the lamp. His next act was to take the heavy stick which stood in a corner near the stove. These preparations he made slowly, deliberately, in absolute silence, as if to increase the effect of what he was about to do. When they were completed he stood with his back against the door and looked at his nephew without speaking, drawing his left hand slowly up and down the stick. Thunder Boy watched the slow movement of his uncle's fingers as if the action fascinated him. He drew a deep breath to nerve himself for the torture that was to come. In the cabin the stillness of those few tense moments of expectancy seemed a stretched thing about to snap. In the unlit stove were no clickings, and its woody voices were dumb. Only the clock ticked out its medicine monotonously upon the wall.

Kennedy opened his mouth and moistened his thick lip before he spoke.

"You've been in the bush. You met the Indian woman under the trees—*there!*"

He jerked his thumb over his shoulder in the direction of the hemlock, so that there should be no doubt as to his meaning, and then waited for an answer. But Thunder Boy made no reply; only looked at him with desperate eyes.

"I told you to keep clear of the bush," Kennedy went on in a quiet tone. "I told you not to walk out of this clearing, or I'd give you such a thrashing as you'd not want to walk anywheres at all. You *hev* walked! Very well. Now we'll see how far you'll feel like

walking to-morrow, or the day after that. I'll teach you to disobey *me!* "

During the rest of this speech Kennedy never lifted his voice above the dull level of its beginning. A certain number of the actual words conveyed no meaning to the boy. But what the words lacked, the voice carried. Its unlifted tones made his pulses throb. That was the way his uncle spoke when he intended deliberately to do the greatest damage. Now that it was clear that his meeting with his grandmother had been discovered, he knew only too well what to expect. Even apart from the voice, the expression on his tormentor's face would have been sufficient preparation. The heavy jaws, dropped just enough to show the teeth—what remained of them—discoloured with much tobacco juice; the upper lip, curling with suppressed fury; and the slightly twisted mouth, which gave the impression of a soundless snarl;—none of these signs were lost upon the trembling boy. And, above all, the eyes! Thunder Boy had once before looked into eyes with just such an expression in them; but they had been a wolf's, not a human being's.

In that brief, throbbing pause which succeeded Kennedy's speech, while the man and the boy gazed at each other in silence, a long-drawn, desolate cry came wailing from down the river in the direction of the lake. It was a sound to make the flesh creep, completely fitting the present moment of hideous expectancy,—the deed done into a voice before it was committed. But unearthly though its vibrations were, Kennedy had heard it too often before, to let it affect his resolution. To Thunder Boy it was one of the familiar sounds of his childhood—the old, wild voice of the loon. It

was a call ; a penetrating summons from the haunted levels of the great water out there in the dusk of the falling night. Out there, where the lake glimmered, and the river ran, was freedom, beyond the walled imprisonment of the wooden lodges ; the freedom of the great Indian life where the White Man's authority did not hold. . . . The loon was calling him, and the quiet waters ; and all the unfettered wings and feet out there in the tremendous dusk ! . . . And he could not obey. . . . He was here, caught, caged, helpless before his captor, as a wolf-cub in a trap.

He saw his uncle take a step towards him. He saw him slowly raise the heavy stick. He knew that in a moment the first pitiless blow would fall, and the agony begin. He caught his breath in a little gasp, watching the stick.

There was a sound of footsteps outside. Then the latch rattled. With a frown of annoyance, Kennedy lowered the stick.

" Who's there ? " he called out angrily.

" Me," a gruff voice replied. " Soapy."

The latch was rattled again, as if the speaker was impatient. Darting a savage look of baulked fury at his victim, Kennedy put the stick back into its corner, unbolted the door, and let his visitor in. " Soapy " was a low-sized man, broad in the chest, and built deep, as it were. He was an old mate of Kennedy's, and had spent most of his time knocking about from one backwoods camp to another, where he earned his nickname by the assumed gentleness of his manners rather than any cleansing friction of his person, which was dirty in the extreme. His present impatience was apparently owing to the fact that his stock of

chewing tobacco was run out, and that he should be "stranded for the darned stuff," unless his pal could "loan him half a cent's worth," before the next stock came in. But when Kennedy had produced some from his own store, and grudgingly cut off as much as he thought fit to "lend," when he knew there was only an extremely remote probability of its ever being paid back, Soapy disclosed a second reason for his visit which made Thunder Boy prick up his ears.

"They're wantin' you over at Runnin' Willy's," he said abruptly. "There's been a dust-up over to Three Rivers, an' a white man killed. Redskins, of course. Snakes again, so they say. An' Willy's wantin' to have a bit of a pow-wow, an' see what's best to be done in case the pretty little dears should fancy a scalp or two down our way; so as we could invite 'em to a friendly cup o' tea!"

In spite of Soapy's characteristic play of fancy, Kennedy looked grave. The warning Katoya had given him a few weeks before, came back to him with disagreeable force. He told Soapy of the squaw's reappearance.

"Something's up, you bet your bottom dollar," Soapy said, "or *she* wouldn't be smellin' round!"

"I've warned her off before," Kennedy said, "but the varmint's like the rest o' them darned redskins. The only 'No' they'll understand is a bit of cold lead plugged into them."

"That's a fact," Soapy admitted. "It's time they was cleared out. I suppose the boy don't tell ye nothin'? I shouldn't be surprised if *he* didn't know a thing or two about his redskin relations!"

"I was just goin' to have a few quiet words with

him when you came," Kennedy said dryly. "But there! I don't suppose he'd tell me anything but lies. They're all liars—every man, woman and child."

"I guess you've got somethin' that ain't far off being a spy in that there boy," Soapy said, as he rolled his plug of tobacco in his mouth. "Else, why was the old 'un so keen to plant him on us?"

"Ha!" Kennedy exclaimed. "You think that too, do you? I've thought that myself more than once lately. If that's so, the sooner she's cleared out, the better!"

"But what about the boy?" Soapy asked. "Somethin's got to be done with him."

"Don't you go worryin' yourself thin about that," Kennedy said, in a tone full of meaning. "I'll break *that* young gentleman into tellin' no tales!"

Both men looked at Thunder Boy, each in his own peculiar way. A great deal of their talk he only partially understood. But the little he had grasped, coupled with the way they looked at him, convinced him that no good could come either to his grandmother or himself from their present exchange of views. From that time on, they talked in such low voices that, although he strove with all his might to follow what they said, he could only catch a word here and there. Nevertheless, the thing which he had already partly grasped came to a certainty in his mind: his grandmother's danger grew.

Presently both men got up to leave. Thunder Boy, watching every movement, carefully kept from looking towards the door. But his whole body, and his mind behind it, was ready for a desperate dash for freedom at the least opportunity offered. But it

seemed as if Kennedy suspected something of the sort, for when he had let Soapy go out, he held the door half open, and while he took the key from the inner side, he roughly ordered the boy to stay where he was. Then going out himself, he shut it quickly, and the boy heard him lock it on the outside.

Left to himself, his heart sank. Whatever evil was being plotted against his grandmother, he could do nothing to warn her now. He was as safely a prisoner as if he were a wolverine in one of his uncle's powerful steel traps. From what he had gathered, he was convinced that at this very moment Kennedy and his mate were on their way to make Katoya's visit known to the meeting at Running Willy's in order to arrange some plan to drive her out of the neighbourhood or murder her if she would not be driven. And she would not know of the plot. And in six days, when the moon was full, she would come back, and fall into whatever trap the pale-faces had prepared. He gazed desperately all round the cabin. He saw the locked door; the window firmly secured with heavy wooden bars within and without. Never before had he hated the white men's lodges with such a bitter hatred as now. These log-built walls seemed as if they would allow him enough breath for his body, so that his mind might have leisure to go mad in their narrow space. And yet every moment in which he did nothing was another coil in the lariat that would bring his grandmother to her doom.

Suddenly, in a passion of desperation, he rushed at the door, and flung himself against it with all his might. The wood creaked a little. Otherwise, the strong framework did not stir. He leaped to the window,

wrenching furiously at the wooden bars. They were so well seasoned and firmly nailed that they did not even creak. Then a sort of frenzy took possession of him, the like of which he had never felt before. He raged round the cabin, like a crazy thing, smashing everything that came in his way. Yet it was in no petty spirit of revenge that he wrecked the pale-face's property thus. For the time being, he had ceased to be a mere boy. He had lost the sense of humanity. It was not just an angry Indian boy who had suddenly let himself go. It was a hurricane of blind passion in the shape of one, which swept the white man's household goods into chaos with the reckless fury of the blizzard when it rushes howling down from the Pole. To all intents and purposes, Thunder Boy was mad. He was certainly possessed—possessed by things which he did not understand. The spirits were entered into him, the spirits which had stirred the currents of men's blood before the dusk of civilization had darkened their morning eyes. The "medicine" of his ancestors, whom that dusk had never overtaken, was alive again within him; and not of them only, but that of the creatures also—wolf, bear, panther, moose—which burst up through the human crust and shattered it to fragments in the backward sweep of the moons; the wild souls, and the wild creatures, crying to him with the grand stormy voices of the great contests, and the great adventures, down all the forests of Time!

When he came to himself, he found himself trembling by the overturned stove, gazing in horror at the chaos about him, as if it had been wrought by some one else. The interior of the cabin was now a total

ruin. Almost every breakable thing in it lay smashed in the general wreckage.

But while Kennedy's household gods had gone crashing down to chaos, there was one object which retained its lofty bearing intact, and continued to tick serenely above the general doom. Thunder Boy, glutted with vengeance, caught sight of it high on the wall. . . . Still at its medicine-making! Still, in its mouthless hypocrisy, gnashing at the silence with invisible teeth!

That hateful embodiment of the White Man's cunning, and the timepiece of his cruel will, goaded him to a fresh outburst of fury. He rushed to the wall, seized the pendulum and winding chain convulsively in both hands, pulled with all the force that was in him, and brought the clock down with a bang. Then, having jumped on its upturned face, and stamped it in, he fell upon it with the stick, and beat its works out upon the floor.

Gradually, as he calmed down, his wits began to work. There was no need for much meditation to tell him what would happen when Kennedy returned. The stick, which he had used as his weapon of demolition, had defied destruction itself. He now thrust it out of sight under the debris, but he knew it was still there, ready for his own destruction when its owner should discover it. Terror sharpened his wits.

Almost the only thing which he had not broken was the bottle holding the candle which Kennedy had apparently forgotten to extinguish before he went out and which was still burning, smokily, casting a gloomy light on the scene of desolation. It was quite plain to Thunder Boy that his only chance of escape lay in total darkness before his uncle could strike a light on his

return. Judging the distance carefully, he arranged the pieces of a broken chair and some other fragments just where anyone would step on first entering the cabin. The rest of the wreckage he placed in different parts of the room. Then he blew out the candle, and crouched down by the wall between the window and the door.

It was very dark now, and the moon would not rise for another hour. Outside, there was a glimmer of stars; but the mist was rising from the river, and obscured the ground to the height of a man's knees, in a wandering shroud. Within the cabin, the darkness was complete.

Thunder Boy, crouching on the floor, seemed to count, in his heart's drumming, the passing of the hours, since the hated clock would tick them out no more. The night deepened towards the rising of the moon. With the moon escape would be more difficult. . . . Would Kennedy never return?

Ah! Footsteps at last. It was a heavy tread which the boy's ear recognized only too well. It was coming nearer. . . . His heart beat its muffled drum-note up into his head.

Nearer and yet nearer! . . . Close now! And now the tread at the door!

A pause; and as Thunder Boy waited in an agony of suspense, the beating of his heart was as of the drumming of Polikotix, the great medicine-man, when he drummed by the couch of a sick person to expel the evil spirit.

And now the key is in the lock; and now it turns with a snap!

When Kennedy opened the door, the cool night air

rushed in. In the same instant, it seemed to be turned into solid substance, and to rush out again like an explosive. The explosion took Kennedy full in the stomach, and knocked the wind clean out of him. He doubled up with a gasp, staggered, caught his foot in the chair entanglement, and fell with a crash to the floor.

When he had picked himself up, and recovered his breath, he awoke to the humiliating fact :

Thunder Boy was gone !

Almost beside himself with rage, he plunged out into the clearing, bellowing his nephew's name. He might as well have called to the night-hawks, whistling far up in their starlit hunting-grounds, to come and perch on his fist. Nothing else answered him out of the vacancy. His furious shouts were sucked into silence by the enormous suction of the night.

He ran back to the cabin, fell, bruised himself over a second pile of wreckage, and lit the candle. For a moment or two, the sight which met his infuriated gaze struck him dumb. Then he spoke, and persons at the other side of the settlement came to their doors to listen !

While he raved, a pair of swift moccasined feet fled away into the darkness ; and the mist covered their going in its moist and wandering shroud.

CHAPTER XIII

HOW THEY PADDLED FOR THEIR LIVES

WHEN Thunder Boy launched himself head-first into his uncle's stomach, he had only one clear idea. That was, to get out of the cabin at all costs, and make a straight line for the river. For the river, therefore, he made, running like a buck. If only he could reach a canoe before the alarm was given, he thought he could escape. He knew every inch of the ground and trusted to the darkness and the mist combined to conceal his flight. As he fled across the clearing, he caught sight of something on his left which looked like a man; but his haste was too desperate for him to slacken his pace in order to make sure.

He reached the river, launched the first canoe he came to, seized the paddle, and was already afloat, before Kennedy's first bellow roared across the stillness. Once in the full swing of the current, it travelled rapidly, urged by his vigorous strokes. By the time Kennedy's last roar reached him, he was already well on his way to the lake. After a while, he stopped paddling, to listen. Except for the rippling of the water against the canoe, and the dripping of the drops from his lifted paddle, there was not a sound. On each side, the forest rose in a gigantic blackness, but over its eastern summits the sky was brightening, and he knew that, in a very short time now, the moon would rise. . . . Hark! What was

that? He held his breath to listen. Yes, there was no mistaking it; the plunge of paddles in the direction of the camp. As yet the sound was so distant that it was little more than a faint throb, like a pulse in the night air; but that was probably only because it was round a bend in the river, and was muffled by the trees. It sent a thrill along his nerves, as he started paddling swiftly again.

After some time, he came to the point where the river joined the lake, somewhere on the shores of which he believed his grandmother's camp was situated. She had said the great lake to the south, and from the description she had given him, the camp must lie somewhere to the west, along the northern shore. Thanks to his early training among immense spaces of wood and water, he possessed the faculty of direction in a remarkable degree. But by the time he reached the lake the mist was so thick, that he had already gone for some distance before he discovered that he had left the river behind, and was out upon the lake. The mist was all about him. It was impossible to see where the shores lay. If he continued paddling he might go astray, and find himself far out of his course when the mist cleared. There was nothing to be done but lie-to and wait till morning. He listened intently, and heard nothing but the soft push of the water against the canoe. Then far away, as before, he caught the faint sound of paddles. It grew more and more distinct. They were coming then, hidden in the mist! His first instinct was to start again. Yet, knowing that if he did so, he might run into danger, instead of avoiding it, and betray his presence by his paddle, he checked the impulse, and remained where he was. To do so, with the sound

of his pursuers' advance growing louder every minute, demanded a good deal of courage. Yet with his paddle gripped ready for instant action, he let the canoe drift as it would, and never stirred. The sound came so close at last, that he expected every moment to see the dark shape of a canoe loom through the mist. The moon had risen now, and gave quite sufficient light for discovery in case the mist should lift. Crouching low in the canoe, Thunder Boy waited. Nearer and nearer! so near, that he could hear the ripples against the bows of the passing canoe. He held his breath, and the perspiration started from his pores. And so, with less than three lengths between them, Kennedy passed the hunched figure in the canoe and never saw a sign.

The noise of paddles died away at last, and all the watery world lay dumb under the mist. Motionless, under that moonlit vapour Thunder Boy watched out the night. When the first glimmer of dawn began to lighten in the east, he paddled close in-shore in order to take advantage of the cover afforded by the willows. As the light increased, he peered out anxiously to see if any canoe were to be seen. Nothing suspicious showing itself in the misty distance, he pushed the canoe out from its hiding-place, and paddled softly along, keeping as close to the bank as possible. He continued to hug the shore for a long distance, without finding any trace of his grandmother's camp, and began to fear that she had moved it to some other spot, or that it was so well hidden that he had overshot the place. As the time went on, and still there was no sign, he grew frightened. Suppose he could not discover her, after all? The situation he would find

himself in if he failed would be terrible indeed ; for he could expect no mercy if he fell into the hands of his pursuers, and were taken back a prisoner to the dreaded settlement. And he would not have been able to warn his grandmother, after all, and all would be lost.

Then, when he had almost given up hope, suddenly, round the end of a little bay, he came upon the camp.

Katoya was preparing to light her fire, and was amazed at her grandson's arrival. But when he explained what had happened, she realized at once the extreme danger of the situation, and that there was not an instant to be lost. So she set to work immediately to load her own canoe with the necessary things for starting a new camp in some far-distant spot, safe from interference from enemies, pale-face or Indian. Where it would be found she did not know. The great wilderness, with all its waterways, was before her, and she was free of it wherever there was water enough to float. The one thing of utmost importance now was to start before their escape could be cut off.

She had just finished her preparations when Thunder Boy saw a canoe appear round a distant point. He had barely time to call his grandmother's attention to it, when it almost immediately passed out of sight behind a curve in the shore.

" They come ! " Katoya exclaimed.

And by the grim tone in her voice, he knew that a great struggle was about to begin. While they were still looking, they saw a second canoe round the point and follow the first. Katoya made a curious noise in her throat.

" Quick ! Into my canoe ! " she said. " We must

leave the other. Bring your paddle with you. We shall be caught if we try to take both canoes."

Thunder Boy carried out his grandmother's order with lightning speed. Katoya got in quickly, gave the canoe a strong shove from the bank, and began to paddle hard.

There was no need to tell him to do likewise. It was not the first time that they had handled a canoe together ; and so they made rapid way, keeping as close in-shore as possible, in order not to attract notice by going out on the open water.

It was broad daylight now, and the early mist was lifting. It still drifted here and there in floating patches, so that the farther distances were often entirely lost. Every now and then, one or other would throw an anxious glance behind, dreading what they might see, but the course Katoya followed kept them hidden in the winding of the shore, and for some considerable time nothing was seen of their pursuers.

Suddenly, they heard a shout. Looking back, they saw the thing they had been dreading—a canoe swing round a point not very far behind. Almost immediately a second shout followed the first. They were seen ! Katoya grunted again, and gave the paddle a savage plunge.

Now that the winding of the shore ceased to conceal them, she had two alternatives before her ; either to take to the open water in order to reach the point she was making for in the shortest possible time ; or, to run the canoe in under the willows, and take to the bush, in case its hiding-place were discovered. But the objection to this second alternative was the danger of losing the canoe altogether, and the being forced to

travel through the forest for vast distances through a country that was practically unknown. In an instant she made up her mind and determined to risk a race.

Thunder Boy had no idea why his grandmother was taking to the open lake. It seemed to him to increase the danger of being captured. Yet experience had taught him that at a dangerous crisis, the wisdom of her choice was very rarely at fault, and so he followed her example unquestioningly, paddling with all his might. But when, at intervals, he looked round and saw each time, to his terror, that the pursuers, in two canoes, were steadily gaining upon them, he began to grow uneasy.

Where was his grandmother going? Surely it was sheer madness to keep out in the open water where their capture could only be a question of time? There was a sandspit on ahead, to the right. She must mean to run the canoe aground there and escape into the bush. But when they were abreast of the spit, and it was quite plain that she did not intend to land, he was more mystified than ever.

The canoe was going now at a great speed. It must have been a marvel to its pursuers how an old woman and a young boy could keep it moving through the water at that amazing pace. But Katoya's many years had not robbed her body of its fibrous toughness, and her skinny arms had a strength in their muscles which a strong man would not have despised. And although Thunder Boy was as young as his grandmother was old, his life of constant activity, and his own natural vitality, had given him a muscular development far beyond those of his years. Yet, in spite of their

vigorous paddling, it was evident that their pursuers were steadily gaining.

They were nearing the end of the lake now, where it narrowed to the river down which its overflow was poured. The paddles of the oncoming canoes were plainly to be heard, as their occupants urged them forward with all their force. Another noise was also audible, growing gradually louder as they approached the river, which seemed to Thunder Boy like the sound of falls. If that were so, he supposed that his grandmother intended to land when the current became too strong, if she could reach the bank before they were overtaken.

The thing was so desperate now, that it became a race as to which of the canoes should reach the river first. He threw a quick look behind. The canoes of the pale-faces were very close now. Less than half a dozen lengths separated the leading one from their own. In it, holding the bow paddle, he saw Kennedy, with a face like a thunder-cloud.

Nearer and nearer ! Only four lengths now ! It seemed impossible, even if they reached the bank first, that they could escape.

Across the cloud on Kennedy's face there flitted a gleam of triumph. He would have them at last ! A minute more, and the squaw would be obliged to run her canoe ashore to avoid being carried over the falls. Thunder Boy's heart sank within him. Nothing could save them now. He saw himself once more in his uncle's power to be dragged ruthlessly back to the settlement to a future he did not dare to face.

" Paddle ! Paddle ! " Katoya cried fiercely, almost in a scream.

He had been paddling hard all the time. It did not seem possible to go any faster. Yet the wild tone in his grandmother's voice thrilled through him, and gave him fresh courage, with a thrill which was all the keener when he saw that she did not intend to land.

The roar of the falls was very loud now, drowning the sound of their enemies' paddles. The canoe swept on towards it. Kennedy gave a shout, to warn the squaw of her danger. For answer, she steered into the very middle of the current, still paddling with all her might. At each furious stroke, the canoe bounded like a living thing that obeyed her arrogant will; and with every plunge, as she bent to her desperate work, she struck the water fiercely, as if she stabbed it with a knife. A wild light of triumph was on her face, and in her shining eyes. She was no longer the mere Indian grandmother, ancient with many moons. She was Katoya, the powerful medicine-maker; the Seer of strange visions; the Dreamer of terrible dreams. She heard the torrent. She answered its challenge, with all the force of her soul. It was no chaos of blind currents; no rushing weight of watery tumult. It was the clear shouting of distinguishable voices that called to her with the great syllables of the Indian Dead. The Spirits were there—the souls of her mighty ancestors who had ruled the water-world of the West before the White Man was known.

She knew well the risk she ran. She was staking all now on this last desperate venture, to save her grandson and herself from the hatred of the pale-faces. If she succeeded, it was well. If she failed, it was also well. Better to perish in the waters, than fall a victim to the vengeance of their foes.

The waters roared in front. The voices shouted behind. She answered them with a shrill peal of laughter that rang defiantly above the tumult of the falls.

And as Thunder Boy looked and listened, paddling for his life, he caught the infection of his grandmother's wild mood.

It seemed as if the spirits entered into him also, as if the voices of his endless Indian ancestors summoned him, with thundering water-voices, to obey.

He saw the banks sweep by on either hand ; saw the dark line in front where the river seemed to end ; confused shapes of rocks and trees beyond it in the mist ; and, in front, the upright figure of Katoya with her paddle poised in her hand.

She had ceased to ply it now, for the force of the current swept them onward at terrific speed, and all her energy was needed to keep the canoe from capsizing among the whirlpools of the falls. Once only, Thunder Boy looked behind him. He saw the two canoes of their pursuers aground against the left bank, while their occupants stood beside them gazing spellbound down the stream.

And what these thunderstruck watchers saw was the squaw's canoe suddenly shoot forward over the edge of the falls, lift its stern for a moment, and utterly disappear.

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Thunder Boy's first impression as the canoe shot over the top was of a swoop downward into a roaring mist that swirled about them on every side. Then there was a plunge, a deluge of spray, and he was choked and blinded with water. For a moment he

could not see anything but a chaos of mist and boiling foam, dimly overhung by trees ; then, the form of his grandmother in front of him, sitting as before, with her hands clenched on the sides of the canoe. She turned her head, with open mouth, as if she shouted to him. But her voice was drowned in the deafening clamour of the waters. The canoe was half swamped, but had not as yet capsized, and still moved forward. It might be a miracle ; but, since he was still above the flood, instead of below it, it was a miracle which forced itself to be believed.

Gradually the chaos cleared. There was foam and sound enough still ; but less bewilderment. Katoya was plying her paddle again vigorously, now on one side, now on the other, as the currents drove. In that boiling rush of waters, it seemed as if, every moment, the canoe was about to be overturned. Yet the squaw sat there as calmly amid the tumult as if she rode the rippleless levels of a lake. Suddenly a mass of rocks rose into view in the very middle of the flood, the river rushing impetuously through narrow channels, between their jagged edges. If, by deft steering, you avoided one rock, you were, as likely as not, to be hurled upon the other. One foaming channel might allow your canoe to pass in safety, and the other wreck it on the instant. Unless you were familiar with them, your safety rested on pure chance. Katoya eyed the two main channels with a lightning glance. For an instant, her eyelids flickered with indecision. Then she drove the canoe by a powerful stroke towards the right hand. Once again, her marvellous luck befriended her. The canoe swept through the channel without mishap. Yet it was hardly through, when

Thunder Boy saw to his horror a dark mass, awash, just ahead of them. Now, surely, they must split against a sunken rock, about to strike a fatal underwater blow, when the peril of the falls was past.

Katoya saw it too. Instantly, she realized their danger. They were almost upon it when, stooping forward, she drove her paddle downwards with all her force. The canoe heeled almost over and shuddered from stem to stern. For one terrible moment, Thunder Boy thought that they had struck. Instead of which, he saw the half-uncovered rock fall away under their stern, as the canoe recovered her balance, and swept on.

CHAPTER XIV

THE VOICE IN THE HEMLOCK

IN the great hemlock there was a noise. It was a harsh, croaking sound that carried a long distance. For a hundred years the hemlock had kept silence. It was a silence that seemed to grow deeper as the tree gathered darkness with the years : a stillness unbroken except when the wind woke whispers in the heavy foliage, or the blizzards rushed with icy screams from the frozen horror of the North.

It was the sound which suggested the voices of those who had not dined, and were determined not to famish unheard. It sent abroad into the wilderness the message of young defenceless things which would make juicy titbits for more than one hungry prowler in the woods. The mink heard it from the door of her den under a big cedar root. Being a mother herself, with a large litter of young, she ought to have respected the cry of some one else's babies. But her motherhood, instead of softening her nature, seemed rather to increase her animosity towards the world outside her den. Woe to the small animal or bird which fell into *her* merciless clutches ! She would not merely kill it, in order to furnish food for the ravenous family under the cedar root ; but would end its life with a fierce joy in the actual process of killing. Her pointed nose was in every thicket, and when her long, low body took

its snake-like way through the grass, the little people of fur and feather had to trust to their wits rather than their muscles to keep out of her way. Yet in spite of all the fierce mother minks in the American continent, the croaking clamour in the hemlock continued day after day.

It annoyed the ears of the fisher, first cousin to the mink, and all his hunting-wisdom and knowledge of what not to do, was wanted to prevent his climbing the hemlock to investigate the noise. It was all very well for the learned naturalist gentleman at Washington to decorate him with an awful Latin name, and inform the other learned naturalists in Europe that he was one of the largest members of the marten family in America. It would have been more to the point if they had roundly stated in bold English that he was the most pugnacious fighter outside of Congress, and had discovered the raw meat taste of half the American continent a thousand years before Columbus had discovered that it existed at all. But the awfulness of his Latin name, *Mustella Pennanti*, was mild compared with the awfulness of his stomach, which received with equal gratification squirrels, rabbits, chipmunks, ground birds, eggs, toads, frogs, snakes, and dead fish.

There were very few trees that *he* couldn't climb ; and the hemlock, with its broad branches, would have been like going upstairs. It wasn't the fear of going up, but the fear of who might be at home when he got there, which prevented him from paying an afternoon call which might very well have been his last. So although the voice of the hemlock aggravated his hunger, every time he heard it, he kept downstairs as much as possible when in the neighbourhood of the tree.

The sound rose and fell as the breeze carried it, or spilt it into the spaces. Larger and more dangerous beasts than either mink or fisher caught its husky fluctuations in the air. Okonoopo, for instance, the famous grizzly, who had grown such a crusty old bachelor through living alone, that no one would willingly come within a mile of his den, heard it as he sat on his haunches among the high rocks of Tanook, glowering down upon the world. And higher still, on still taller rocks, Manoo, the puma, pricked his round ears towards the faint huskiness as it floated up to his mountain lair. Yet not one of these creatures, big or little, would have dared to disturb the house in the hemlock, whence the husky croakings came.

The father of the huskiness was busy spearing frogs. He was a tall, blue-grey body on stilts, immensely lifted up above the world, and he walked with such long strides that it seemed as if his legs were on loan from some one else, and that his body was trying to catch them up before returning them to their owner at the end of the day's work. Even his bill, which was like a sword, a spear, and a dagger, all rolled into one, was so tremendously long that it appeared to be put on for the purpose of frogging, to be unscrewed presently when it was time to go to bed. But for all his apparent ungainliness, and parts of him being on loan, he could wield his bill with such amazing dexterity that it had to be a remarkably quick frog indeed which could get out of his way.

When he had caught as many frogs as he wanted, he picked them up in a bunch by the legs, spread his enormous wings and sloped heavily up from the lake over the tree-tops, the frogs dangling in fringes on each side

of his bill. And when he hove in sight over the top of the spruces you should just have heard the clamour of excitement that rose in a croakish chorus from the hemlock house of sticks !

Four little blue-heron Croakinesses they were which had robbed the old tree of its silence after so many years. They were as awkward-looking and ungainly babies as you could possibly imagine, with bills so ridiculously long as to make them quite top-heavy. Nevertheless, their father and mother, like all fond parents, were absurdly proud of them, and considered them beauties of the first order. Woe betide marten, mink, wild cat, or lucivee, who should dare to climb the tree sacred to such a nursery ! One lightning stab from either parent's bill, aimed always at the eyes, and the rash intruder was lucky if it got away with nothing worse than one eye out of which it would never see again.

After the meal was over, and the little herons had gorged themselves till their stomachs fairly bulged, the husky chorus ceased as they settled down for the night under the warm roof of feathers which was their mother herself, with her long legs carefully arranged so as to be as little as possible in anybody's way. They jostled and scolded a little at first for the best places ; but when these small scuffles were over, and differences settled, with a drowsy croak now and then as one or other pushed a bit to make itself more comfortable, there was silence at last ; and the stillness which lay at the core of the tree seemed to gather itself together out of the old dead moons. And the only sounds to be heard were the soft lapping of the ripples against the reeds, or the leap of a fish far out on the lake. Oh, the good quiet

nights of the nursery high in the hemlock, with the stars a-glitter in the tall tepee of the sky, and the wash of little breezes that broke in the cover of the ancient tree like waves on a fairy strand ! Oh, the good comforting warmth of the roof of feathers that shut one in from the night ! Oh, the good security of being far above the forest, far above those winding glooms, where the hunting beasts padded the secret trails ; safe above all the treacherous world, in the blessed house of sticks !

And all the time, for double security, there was father heron on a high dead branch, near the top of the tree, mounting guard like a sentinel with the long sword that was his bill drawn always in readiness even when he was asleep.

That was what happened, day after day, night after night—frogging and feeding, watching and sleeping—in spite of all the evil teeth and claws that were busy in the bush.

And then, one day, as Father Heron, having lifted his huge wings and stuck his stilts straight out behind him, went sailing slowly over the tops of the spruces, his quickears, keen as a weasel's, caught the sound of something churning up the water, somewhere far down at the other end of the lake. With a swift turn of his mighty wings, he wheeled away to the right, in order to command a more extensive view ; and there, coming straight up the lake along the northern shore, was a long dark object with creatures upon it that struck their paws into the water and made the disturbing noise.

With a loud croak to warn Mother Heron at home that strangers were approaching, he soared up in a great spiral till he was right above the strange object and

could look down upon it over the edge of himself. What he saw disquieted him very much. There was no blinking the fact that it was an Indian canoe with two Indians on board. That one was an old woman, and the other a young boy, didn't make the thing any less disturbing. He had seen Indians before. Wherever they went, there was sure, sooner or later, to be a fuss. It seemed impossible for them to leave the world alone. They were always in the way; killing and hunting—hunting and killing; or spoiling quiet fishing by canoeing on the lakes. And now they could not even leave this lake alone, but must invade its quiet with one of their detestable canoes, digging up the waters with things they held in their paws!

And the worst of it was, they were coasting along the northern shore, keeping a course which, if they did not change it, must bring them within shooting distance of the precious house of sticks!

What should he do? Up there at that great height his brain worked without obstruction in the clear, sun-washed air. It would not do to fly straight back to the nest, for that would be showing the disturbers the direction in which it lay. He knew he could rely on Mother Heron to keep the young ones quiet, now that he had sounded the alarm. So long as the Indians did not guess where the nest was, they would perhaps continue their journey, and so pass by without suspecting that such a thing was in the neighbourhood. From where he was, he could plainly see the darkness of the hemlock among the lighter foliage of the trees about it. He could even make out the form of his mate as she stood sentinel at the edge of the nest, watching keenly for the first sign of the threatened danger. He gave one

more husky cry to warn her that it was coming nearer, and then slanted down a long slope of air in a completely opposite direction to the nest, until he reached the dense groves of willows fringing the southern shore. Here, from being a wide spread of wing, he changed himself into a long length of leg ; or, rather, into a blue-grey shadow on stilts which rose as motionless from the water as the willows which screened him from view. But although he himself was hidden, his keen eyes could command the whole width of the lake. Nothing within range of that piercing vision escaped him, from the smallest ripple that stirred the reeds, to the gliding movement of the far-away canoe.

And the heron's were not the only eyes which watched the new arrivals as they went coasting slowly along the northern shore. The spotted sandpiper sitting on her big brown-blotched eggs in the carelessly lined nest hollowed in the sand, observed them with startled eyes. Unlike the heron, she was not familiar with Indians and their ways, and had never seen so strange a thing as a canoe before. When it first attracted her notice far down the lake, she took it for a moose-cow swimming across. Unless the cow took it into her head to land on the sandspit, *she* wasn't going to worry. A moose-cow could be a great nuisance when she took to tearing up the water-lilies by the roots and setting people's houses awash with the ripples. Her damp cousin, the water-hen, had often complained about it. But the nearest lily patch was a good quarter of a mile to the west, so if the cow was looking for lily pads, there was no use getting into a fuss. Yet when the supposed cow turned out to be a monster quite unlike any moose, with two other monsters upon it, and when, moreover,

it was seen to be coming dangerously near the spit, the sandpiper's heart misgave her, though she bravely determined to stick to her eggs till the very last moment.

And now the marsh people began to be suddenly aware of what she had seen before they had. They were always dreadfully busy, the marsh people, and chattered incessantly about the merest nothings. The Sora Rails were the worst offenders—gossips to the last rail ! But the marsh wrens were incurably interested in their neighbours' doings, and when anything came along which they didn't approve of, they would scold and gibber like a mob of frenzied old women. At the sight of the oncoming canoe, they began to dart about the rushes, scolding the strangers with every abusive term in the marsh vocabulary. The Spotted Sandpiper became very upset. It was just as if the wrens kept screaming : " Don't come here ! Don't come here ! There are people sitting on eggs ! " It was enough to make these unwelcome strangers land, just to see what all the excitement was about ! If only they would be quiet, and pretend there weren't any birds there at all ! But then the Sora Rails never could keep still for long ; and as for the *wrens* being quiet when they were excited, you might just as well put a match to gunpowder and expect it not to explode !

However, after all this commotion, nothing alarming happened, and the canoe went on past the sandspit, and disappeared behind the alders round the next bend in the shore. The wrens followed it for some distance, abusing it roundly all the time, but as neither the old Indian woman nor the boy who paddled it paid the slightest heed to them, the wrens gave up at last and returned in fussy triumph, as if it was entirely owing

to their ferocity that the intruders had failed to land.

About a mile from the sandspit was a small promontory which was almost an island, shaded by alder-bushes to the water's edge. Katoya, who, above all things, loved an island, no sooner saw it than she decided that here should be their home. At its western end was a little bay, or rather creek, secured from observation from the shore by a rocky bank, thickly overgrown with brambles. A couple of large willow trees made it possible to run the canoe in under their branches so as to be completely hidden from view. On the opposite shore, also, the willows grew thickly, so that the canoe could be readily shot from one cover to another with only a yard or two of the open water to be crossed.

The lake seemed as if it had been discovered by no human eye since the creation of the world. Down to the very edge of the water the great trees, hemlock, water-ash, and tamarac, grew to an immense height, and looked vastly old. Surely here, if anywhere, safety from pale-face or Indian foes was to be found, and one could build a lodge of shelter which none would ever disturb.

Katoya lost no time in making up her mind. She ran the canoe under the willows of the little creek, and immediately began to make preparations for a permanent camp. With the hatchet she had brought with her she cut down a number of strong boughs as a framework for the lodge which she constructed so that one side of it was formed by the overhanging side of a high rock close down to the shore. When these were fixed, she made Thunder Boy cut alder and willow stems, with which she wattled the space between the

supports, so as to make a thickly woven wall, which, later on, she would daub with mud to make the whole weather-tight and warm. When at last the lodge was finished, the light began to fail. When it had once begun, it ended quickly ; for the great Northern Dusk is a swift thing, unlike the slow twilights of the East. And as it began, so it finished—with voices. And the voices continued into the darkness and made it alive with things you couldn't see. Sometimes they were clear and loud ; a fox calling to his mate or an owl hooting from the edges of the swamp. Sometimes they were faint and very far away, so that only a trained ear could catch them or tell what they were. And whether they were loud or faint, the wash and whisper of the waters made a continuous undertone of sound.

Before it grew too dark to see, Katoya built a fire, putting a few small sticks together so cunningly that, in a very little time, there was a blaze. That was good in Thunder Boy's eyes—very good. It was also good to his ears and his nose. Just as, long ago, when he was a papoose, the little woody voices had been garrulous in the stove, so now, from the freshly gathered sticks, the little voices hissed and crackled and exploded confidentially in the glimmer under the trees. And with all his might Thunder Boy attended to them, sniffing at them approvingly with his nose.

When the fire was hot enough Katoya put the pot on, hanging it cleverly on a forked stick, and threw in some bits of dried meat to make an Indian stew. And when the smell of *that* got into Thunder Boy's nose, he became as hungry as a wolf.

Then, when supper was over, and the wolf part of him quieted, he began to want to eat things with the

other eager stomach he had, and which the White Man calls the brain. . . . Where were they? What was this great water? Could the canoe pass through it to the other side of the mountains?—for always Thunder Boy was wanting to reach the mountains, and climb up towards the Thunder Bird, and the beginnings of the sky.

CHAPTER XV

QUOSK, THE INVISIBLE

IF his mind dwelt continually on the Thunder Bird, it was largely his grandmother who was originally to blame ; for she had told him such tales of this awful fowl that his imagination began to make pictures of it so terribly real that he could almost hear the thunder rumbling in its wings. And when, on the first evening, there had come from the vast hollow under the stars, a mysterious, haunting cry, he at once attached it to the Thunder Bird, and waited for the storm. And, of course, as usually happens when people's imaginations run away with them, he was all wrong ; for the voice was none other than that of Father Heron, or, as the Indians call him, Quosk, which means, " the Night's Question " ; and if ever a creature might be suitably called the Silence Bird, and was farthest away from Thunder-making, that certainly was he. For, while the Thunder Bird was such a hustling mass of deafening disturbance, that his blunderings shook the Continent from Alaska to Cape Horn, Quosk was so monstrously shy, that it was next to impossible to get near him, and many people had lived all their lives without ever knowing him as anything but a husky croak by day and a question in the night.

Katoya, being one of the few people who had actually

feasted upon Quosk with the human eye, was able to enlighten her grandson as to what this mysterious being really looked like. But to be told what a thing looks like is a very different thing from seeing it for yourself. So, the very next morning, as soon as he had swallowed his breakfast, he got into the canoe when Katoya wasn't looking, and paddled softly down the lake.

Now the one way to be quite sure of not seeing Quosk was to try to steal upon him over the water. Indeed, it almost seemed as if Quosk's legs were in some electric communication with the under-water world. Wireless telegraphy hadn't been invented, of course, and Quosk was too incurably old-fashioned ever to have used it, if it had. Yet the way he got his information really looked as if he had some watery sort of "wireless" of his own, and learned how the world wagged simply by planting his tall stilts firmly in the shallows, and "listening-in" with his legs.

On this particular morning he was fishing, as usual, towards the other end of the lake, and—as was usual also—his luck was with him, and he had made a nice little haul. The nice little haul was distributed at various depositing points, wherever a clump of rushes or tussock of coarse grass had seemed to him to have been provided on purpose as a temporary larder, and where the acute nose of no mink, marten, musquash, or fisher would be likely to scent it out. At such times as Quosk's frugal mind decided that the sum-total of the accumulated larders would be equal to the strain put upon it by the gorging throats of the nursery at home, he would stride from larder to larder, never forgetting a single hiding-place, and deposit the whole morning's catch in a single spot. Then in the most

methodical manner possible, he would arrange every frog, fish, pollywog, mussel, or musk-rat, so that a leg or a tail of each criss-crossed in the middle of the pile, while the heads formed the outer circle. And when all was arranged to his liking, Quosk would insert the lower mandible of his great bill under the pile, and bring his other down hard and firm over the crossing legs. Then, having lifted the pile in the air, and shaken it gently to see that nothing was loose or likely to fall out, he would fly home with the entire larder, a dangling fringe to his bill.

A noble sight was Father Heron, so belarded and befringed, slanting statelily down to the hemlock on a long slope of the wind! Immense rejoicings in the nursery!—croakings, squirmings and gawpings of bills, when a low croak from Mother Heron had signalled the approach, and every little greedy Huskiness craned its stubbly neck to catch sight of the glorious home-coming of the blessed larder on wings!

The morning was very still. Hungry prowlers which had hunted during the night, or in the early hours, were now resting after a full meal, or already fast asleep. The lake itself was without a ripple, and the very fish seemed too drowsy to jump. Even Quosk himself looked sleepy, with his eyes half closed, and his head well down between his shoulders, as if it was too much exertion to do anything more with his bill. And then, while nothing was heard but the hum of insects, and while certainly nothing stirred within his range of vision, a message came to his legs. It was the most delicate vibration possible. It might have come from the wake of a water-hen, or the twist of a musk-rat's tail. It *might* have been caused by either of these, but

yet, again, it mightn't ! The network of Quosk's nervous system was extraordinarily subtle. Something about the vibration thrilled it unpleasantly. Suddenly, his eyes grew very wide awake. That was the only outward sign that anything was happening inside him, or that the whole of his blue-grey body had become one enormous question-mark on stilts.

Down the lake came Thunder Boy, paddling with such precaution that almost the only sound was the tinkle of the water-drops as they fell from the lifted blade. As he came he watched the shore so closely, darting his sharp glances into every nook and shaded bay, that it seemed as if nothing could escape them. He saw a musquash leave his unfinished breakfast, and plunge headlong into the water. He caught the gleam of a great burning jewel, and heard a long rattling call, as a kingfisher flashed up-stream. He saw a deer leap splashing from the lily-pads, and turn once on the bank to gaze at him in bewilderment, before she disappeared in the trees. He even saw a sheldrake, that wariest of water-birds, swimming with her brood of little ones through an opening in the reeds. But before his canoe had rounded the point which hid Quosk's fishing-ground from view, that elusive bird had lifted his "wireless" out of the water ; and all Thunder Boy saw of him was a hurried glimpse of a shadow on wings which slanted out of sight behind the distant trees. And although he loitered about that part of the lake half the day, not another glimpse did he get of a single blue feather of him ; and all the time he stayed there, Mother Heron so disciplined the Huskinesses, that the nursery in the hemlock remained dumb.

But long after the canoe was beached again at the camp, and when the light began to grow yellower in the drowsy afternoon, a blue-grey Ancientness on stilts stalked majestically from food-store to food-store, never forgetting one, and at length wafted the accumulated larder with solemn pomp and circumstance of pinion through the hungry yellow air.

And after that, for many a day, Thunder Boy exhausted all his woodcraft, as taught by Little Brother, the coyote, in the old Cut-bank school, in attempt after attempt to stalk Quosk unseen. Yet, however craftily he crept down through the alders, or moistened his stomach by flattening his body in damp pockets in the reeds, all the satisfaction he ever got was to come occasionally upon huge footprints in the mud, which was the heron's clumsy prehistoric manner of stamping his name, or, sometimes, lying awake at night, to hear a far mysterious summons, that set his nerves throbbing, as Quosk, "the Night's Question," haunted the middle sky.

Gradually, as Thunder Boy sank daily deeper into this withdrawn wilderness life, and moon after moon never saw a single human soul, except his grandmother, the world he had once known—even the Indian world of his own Red kindred—faded farther back into a retirement that was almost like a dream.

Yet what was dreamlike to him was sharp enough reality to those he had left behind. The settlement carried on a highly matter-of-fact existence, and the gossiping tongues that were accustomed to collect at Running Willy's saloon, continued to wag, and to confirm each other in the opinion that the Indian menace was no less now that the medicine-woman had escaped

with her grandson into the west. And most certainly Kennedy was no dream, but a consistent tobacco-chewing and hard-drinking reality, with a black hate and a brooding revenge at the heart of him as a pivot on which the chewing and drinking turned. And when, one day, by evil chance, he came upon Scar-face in the woods, and had a long conversation with him, the pivot revolved rapidly with far-reaching results.

The Fall waned, and the winter came; and the lake froze; and the moose yarded himself; and the wolves hovered watchfully on the skirts of the ever-moving herds of the caribou. Katoya, like the moose, prepared herself for the worst—and got it! It needed all her wisdom and resourcefulness to keep herself and Thunder Boy in food and warmth while the blizzards roared and the wolves howled. And although, when the snow finally thawed, and the deer began to browse on the new grass in the glades, both she and the boy were very thin, she had contrived her stores so cleverly that they were both in excellent health.

And when once the spring started, it came in with a rush. It began with the swelling of the buds of the Black Birch, so that when you broke a twig, the air was full of delicious scent. It went on to the green leaves of the Trailing Arbutus, and rose from the mud with the pied hood of the Skunk Cabbage; though when *that* had blossomed in royal purple, a million twigs of birch couldn't have drowned the smell. Finally, having turned the open hillsides blue with wild anemones, it ran riot in every direction, and the world was born anew.

Into the midst of all this ferment of the spring, there came down the green glades of the westward-

sloping spruce-woods a figure out of the east. Its buckskin moccasins stirred the newly springing grasses with a steady, unhurrying stride. The three eagle feathers fastened on its hair turned their edges slightly in the soft gusts of the morning wind, but otherwise were not agitated by their wearer's even gait. And his passing was almost as soundless as the rising of the sap. Silent though it was, it was not unnoticed. Sharp little eyes that shone like dew under the brambles and ferns twinkled with fear and astonishment at the unwelcome intruder as he glided by. Sharp-pointed little noses wrinkled up-wind towards him, and scented disapprovingly the acrid Indian odour that spilled itself on the air. And the chipmunks and blue jays didn't content themselves with merely tinkling, but vented their displeasure in violent remarks. Yet whatever small hostilities twinkled, sniffed, or scolded, the feathered figure out of the east continued its steady going in a lofty unconcern.

Along the lake shore, business was proceeding as briskly as in the woods. There were no croakings in the hemlock, it is true, because the new Voices there were still in the egg, and had not yet got themselves hatched; but Mother Heron, sitting sedately on the nest, had a great business in progress under her blue feathers, and set the long javelin of her beak at anything but a friendly angle in the stranger's direction as he passed by unconsciously not fifty paces away from the tree. A musquash, making his breakfast of clams, and a mink going craftily down to the lake to see what froggy or fishy trifles she might surprise with a swift stroke of her deadly paw, also observed the unwelcome presence as it bore down upon her, and turned quickly

back into the woods. And seeing nothing of these small happenings, but with eyes that seemed, nevertheless, to be always looking for trails, the figure having reached the lake wound warily in and out between the alder-fringed bays.

He followed the shore for some distance before he paused and gazed out over the great levels glistening in the morning sun. He stood for a long time, without moving an inch ; so still that another equally motionless figure far away on the other side of the lake, watching *him*, might have mistaken him for a rotting tree stump, if the watcher had been any other than Quosk of the unblinking eye. But the Unblinking Eye never made mistakes. Either it saw things, and knew what they were, or it did not see them at all : the reason of the latter being a very simple one—that the eye was shut ! And in the present instance, Quosk had the advantage that, whereas *he* stood in deep shadow, the stranger was in full sunlight, so that, from the feathers on the top of his head, to the blotches of mildew on his deer-skin moccasins, every detail was perfectly plain for those who had eyes to see. So, if Quosk was too far off to appreciate the *mildew*, he was in no sort of uncertainty at all about the *man*.

Not more than half a mile farther along the shore to the west was a sight which the stranger would have given a great deal to look upon, and which he had already travelled a moon of days to see. But he had already traversed the shores of so many lakes in his fruitless search without ever falling upon the faintest trace of what he came to find, that he began to weary of wide expanses of water which made an end of every trail. Moreover, a long spit of sand to his right

concealed the farther reaches, so that a dozen camps might have lain there, and given no sign of their existence.

After he had stood for a considerable time, he turned, and, striking straight into the woods, continued on a north-west course.

The shadows had hardly moved a hand's-breadth to the east after his departure, when a canoe swept round the sandspit and Thunder Boy came paddling down the lake.

CHAPTER XVI

THE COMING OF MANOO

THE days went by, and the nights. The secrets of the great lake, and of its solemn shores, closed themselves slowly, one by one. Those that remained obstinately unfolded, would probably remain so till the races of mankind, White as well as Red, had sunk into the slime from which they rose. Their obstinate refusal was not without its charm. It lent mystery and allurements. It was the lure of a locality haunted by Spirits which did not wait for darkness, but went by invisibly in shimmering veils of light.

That old Indian life had been free, and had seldom irked Thunder Boy with restraint, but here the freedom was incomparably wider. It seemed as if Katoya and he had passed the limits of man's liberty, and man's law, into an older universe where, since the beginning, all things had gone free.

Yet everything was not free. Not more than a day's journey from them, if they had only known, a thing was tied. It was a small thing, but in its little body beat the pulse of a great Freedom ; a Freedom which had been handed down to it through generations as countless as the hairs in its furry pelt. The thing which tied it was a deer-skin thong, about two and a half yards in length. Thickness about a quarter of

an inch. Yet it was the thickness which mattered, not the length. A quarter of an inch of deer-skin thong is a tough problem for baby teeth to solve, even if they are the extremely sharp ones of a young panther under two months old. It was like the furious onslaught of a shrimp upon the hawser of a battleship. I don't know what observation an up-to-date New York dentist might have to offer upon the dental equipment of a shrimp. But I know that the teeth of the little Manoo were of the very finest quality, and could have punished the shrimp much more thoroughly than they appeared to injure the thong. Nevertheless, they bit and pulled and tore, and did the most desperate things to the thong, and went on doing it, hour after hour, at intervals, all day long, and far into the night, till the little jaws fairly ached, and the little eyes blinked with sleep. Yet, when everything was over, and the thong had been so mauled and bitten and worried and chewed, that if it had been anything else than what it was, you would have expected it to lie in a hundred pieces, all chopped up into the very smallest lengths, all you would say was, after a careful examination, that some one seemed to have amused himself by making patterns all over it with a very sharp pin.

And thus it was that, while the freedom of the whole West swept about him in endless circles, the little Manoo tussled with destiny, and was the most miserable little mortal in the compass of all the Seven Seas.

And it wasn't as if the thong was all. There were kicks from enormous feet in deer-skin moccasins—no wonder he hated all the deer tribe, and was a deadly terror to everything with or without antlers, after he

grew up—and smacks from heavy Indian hands, and savage sounds that thundered down upon him from the great height where the Gods had their faces, and crammed their mouths with smoke.

All the Gods smoked, but all did not smite. The great smiter was the man who had killed his mother, and destroyed his brothers, and who had only spared him that he might carry him as a trophy into the Snake camp. The cub would make a good medicine for the tribe, when he grew up, he told the braves; a grown panther, with a strong medicine-power which would protect them from the attacks of their enemies, and ensure them an easy victory when they themselves attacked. The braves were quite willing to receive any medicine-power which should make them stronger than they were. This stranger from the east, who brought them messages of goodwill from the dreaded white people, and who hated his own tribe with a deadly hatred because they had driven him out, was doubly welcome, both as a bearer of good medicine, and as one who would lead them on a warpath to certain victory; for, to gratify his revenge, he would even betray his own people, their ancient enemies, into their power.

What the little Manoo's views on the matter were, nobody troubled to find out. When you were two months of age you did not have views. If you had, they had best be cuffed or kicked out of you till you were old enough to know that it is safest to hold no views at all unless they are the same as held by everybody else.

So, in order that the little Manoo's education should be quite perfect with regard to holding views, his

master beat, cuffed and kicked him as much as he pleased ; for that is the way to make a very fierce " medicine " out of a very tame beast. And all the little Manoo could do, by way of retaliation, was to growl a baby growl as deeply as he knew how, and to vent his passion on the deer-hide thong.

But all the kicking and cuffing in the world couldn't prevent the teeth from growing stronger as he grew up, though he left off chewing the thong. It was only a bad habit, his master said, which, like his other bad habits, he had beaten out of him. He had almost beaten another thing out of him, and that was the strange affection for MAN which his panther ancestors had handed down to him from the beginnings of the race : almost, but not quite. And although his faith in the tradition received a rude shock, Manoo remained true to the impulse of his ancestry, and not even the worst treatment could drag him down to the level of the man who was his lord.

But even long-enduring patience will reach a breaking-point at last. One day, when he was a year old, his master, tired of his unaided brutality, having set a powerful husky dog to worry him, Manoo, after making short work of the dog, forgot his ancestors and snapped at the man. For that effort at retaliation he got the most brutal thrashing he had received in his life. When it was over, the Indian left him for dead. But Manoo did not die. His body might be one big bruise from nose to tail ; yet his spirit remained unbroken. That night the chewing habit renewed itself. His teeth were fangs now ; and even a half-inch thickness of deer-thong could not resist their desperate effort. By sunrise he was free.

The wilderness received him ; the wilderness which he had never known since his cub-hood, except as an exasperating lure between the tall tepees ; received him with outstretched arms and hid him for ever in the secret of its heart.

You may search, Stranger from the East ! You may exhaust all your arts of Indian cunning to recapture the "medicine panther," and drag it back again into the circle of your hate. But a stranger Being than you has this day gone out into the wilderness, and a mightier "medicine" than any bred of *your* superstition is at large among the trees !

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It took Manoo some time to recover from his wounds. It took him still longer to learn the ways of the wilderness, so as to feel himself perfectly at home. But what he did not know by instinct he picked up by experience ; and before many months were over, the wild peoples had learned that a new power was to be reckoned with on the trails.

And first of all, Manoo had to fight for his range.

A panther's range is very wide, and sometimes it overlaps that belonging to some one else and leads to scuffles and blood-spilling till the boundaries are properly defined. And Manoo soon discovered that, although he might hunt for a whole day, or even for two, in peace, on the third day, or the fourth, he generally found himself badly mixed up with another person's range, and was forced to clear out quickly, or fight. At first Manoo followed the policy of being polite, and clearing out when asked. But then he was young, and, indeed, only half grown ; while those who offered him the choice of going, or staying to be thrashed,

had done all the growing possible, and were mighty Lords of Tooth and Claw, not to be lightly tackled by a mere half-grown cub. So for the rest of that Fall, and the following winter, Manoo did a lot of clearing out, although, at the same time, he went on patiently growing up. The winter was a hard one, and the game was not only difficult to catch, but skinny when you caught it. Manoo developed great powers of running, and a still greater faculty of cunning, even finer than his feet. And although he did most of his hunting on other people's ranges, he didn't do as badly as might have been expected, and, in spite of blizzards, hunger, homelessness, and "notices to quit," contrived to keep a tag or two of flesh in odd corners of his bones.

Spring came at last, and with it renewed hope and hardihood among the wood-folk, small and big. And though all were thin, and some thinner than others; and some who, like the bears, had gone to bed sleek and bulgy with food, woke up four months afterwards, minus the bulge, and feeling very full of emptiness where the bulge ought to have been;—Manoo, for *his* part, never having bulged, wasn't such a scarecrow as some whom he could name.

* * * * *

During all that summer, Manoo hunted well and grew sleek. By the time the Fall arrived, he had put on so much weight that instead of receiving Notices to Quit, he began to give them; and more than one hunting beast who accepted the challenge, got so severe a mauling from his fearful fangs and claws, that it might consider itself lucky if it escaped with its life.

One of the last notices which Manoo himself received

was from Okonoopo, the great grizzly, whose range was on Tanook, and who lorded it in surly bachelorhood over the whole of its widespread southern flanks.

The two animals had come upon each other late one sultry afternoon. Okonoopo's temper happened to be none too good, and the sight of an intruder in his territory was exasperating to the last degree.

When Okonoopo launched his ultimatum, Manoo didn't wait for the preliminaries of polite warfare, but delivered his answer with a lightning leap and an ear-splitting screech.

The contest was short and sharp. Okonoopo had been so long accustomed to see every living thing skulk out of his way, that the panther's outrageous insolence took him by surprise. He had had many a fight in his time, and had almost invariably come off victor. But in the present instance, he discovered, to his astonishment, that he had found his match, and so, after a drawn battle, in which he was pretty severely punished, he was reluctantly obliged to reconsider the "notice"; and although, from that time on, when they happened to cross each other's path, he roared appalling threats as to what he would do, if Manoo didn't "quit," he found that the hated interloper had come to stay, and that his lordship of Tanook was henceforth disputed by a terror whose presence disturbed his peace by day and haunted his rest at night.

CHAPTER XVII

THE SWAMP

TO the north-west of the lake was a wide space of quaking mud and moisture that had quaked and been damp since the beginning of the world. It was a dismal, uninviting place, where, even at the height of summer, the moisture never evaporated and the very shadows of the cedar-trees seemed to be damp. Round its uncertain edges, the trees crowded thickly as if to suck up nourishment from its bottomless beds of slime. There grew the bristling tamarac, the hardwood, the black water-poplar, and the silver birch. There, also, the feathered hemlock lifted its green sprays high above the spruces, which packed themselves so closely together that their lower branches dwindled into brittle sticks that snapped at the slightest pressure and gave warning to the deer. The larger trees, like the tamaracs and the cedars, hung back from the spongiest places of the swamp, but the alders and witch-hazels, with the recklessness of smaller people, struck out daringly into the danger-zone, and took the mud like creatures of the prehistoric slime. And one old ancientness that called itself a water-poplar bent so far over the oozy depths without falling in, that it seemed to have dug a root through half the Continent and to be holding on to New York.

But the great wonder of the marsh was the sphagnum

moss, matted into inextricable carpets of the most marvellously coloured threads. The mounds and hollows of it were everywhere, like the enchanted landscape of the puckwudgies, the Indian fairy-folk who have not yet decayed. It was this moss which first attracted Thunder Boy, and led to his discovery of the marsh. Going one morning along the lake shore in his fruitless efforts to stalk Quosk, his nose, always keenly alert, like an animal's, had caught a new smell. It was penetrating and pleasant. His nose sniffed at it approvingly, and drew it down into his lungs. Literally, he followed his nose, till he came to the edge of the swamp. And there he learnt what sphagnum moss can smell like in the warmth of the moon of roses. And there were many other things that smelt good besides ; Cedars and Sassafras, Balm-of-Gilead, and scented grass. And all these odours of green-growing things mixed themselves together in a wonderful smell that called the noses of the Wild Kin from far away.

When Thunder Boy found the marsh, he stayed very still. That is the best way of finding out who is on the trails. And although he could not have told you why, he had a feeling that noses were travelling up-wind. Yet, although he remained absolutely motionless, he was seen. The spotted sandpiper didn't know what was approaching. But she knew that a strange creature had already arrived, and expressed her violent disapproval by sharp, closely repeated notes that warned the marsh inhabitants from one end to the other. It really was annoying. Why couldn't she stop it, when she discovered that Thunder Boy was the most peaceable creature imaginable, and wanted nothing better than to be left alone ? But then a spotted sandpiper

is a spotted sandpiper, and has gone on making a fuss about people using their feet since eggs were eggs and sand was sand. Presently she thought better of it, and flew off to her nest.

When she had gone and quietness had once more settled down upon the marsh, Thunder Boy waited and watched. For a long time nothing stirred. Yet the spot was full of whispers and low breathings, such as wet places always have, as if the moisture moved its lips, and sucked air into the slime. And bubbles came up from dark pools, and broke mysteriously, at irregular intervals, as from creatures deeply buried in the underworld of ooze. Century after century the marsh had given out hints and suggestions of this buried existence which breathed as if by stealth and was never to be seen. And yet, although the centuries went over it, and the moons without number came and passed away, Time itself had nothing to do with it. And if the years, as counted by the Red Man and by the White, creeping down towards it from the drier parts of the world, ever reached its quaking edges, they merely rotted into it, like the alder leaves, and went to fatten the slime.

Presently, as Thunder Boy listened, a spruce twig snapped. Instantly, every sense he had became alert ; but he had too much woodcraft to turn his head quickly in the direction of the sound. His eyes moved first, his head following slowly, as if they pulled it after them. At first he could see nothing but the dense depth of the spruces. Then a nose, a pair of nervous ears, and two liquid eyes pushed softly out from the foliage, and he knew that a deer was on the point of emerging. But what was it coming to do? Surely

not to drink, since the lake was less than a hundred yards away, and in every respect a much more satisfactory drinking-place than the treacherous edges of the bog where the water—what could be seen of it—was black with ancient rottenness and immemorial mud. The creature moved its head from side to side and then seemed to be looking straight at him. Yet he knew that as long as you remain motionless, even when full in view, an animal will often fail to detect you, and that it is the nose which will often give it warning before either eyes or ears. But the atmosphere stirred so little that, although the deer's nostrils kept up a constant twitching and wrinkling, the small amount of Thunder Boy that oozed beyond his actual body got mixed with the heavier scent of the sphagnum moss and did not reach the doe. Yet, though her senses failed to show her any definite cause for alarm, it was quite evident that she was far from being at her ease. Even when she took courage to advance into the open, she still questioned the air with her sensitive nostrils, as if some secret faculty warned her that the place was not so empty as it seemed. Soon, however, the smell of the moss overcame everything else, and she gave herself up wholly to its seductive charm. She had come to drink, but not with her mouth. It was her nose which was thirsty, and which drank the delicious scent in quick little gasps that filled her lungs to the full. Once saturated with this intoxicating fragrance, she appeared to regain her confidence, and came stepping delicately down the sloping bank. Then, when Thunder Boy expected to see her stop at the bottom, she almost took his breath away by walking boldly out into the marsh. At every step he watched

to see her sink. Instead of which, he saw her go farther and farther out upon its quaking surface, as if there were magic in her feet. Already, she had reached the middle without mishap. But now the black pools were all about her, gaping like slimy mouths prepared to suck her down. Thunder Boy watched her breathlessly. If she should make a false step now! With her quivering nostrils still drinking in the scent she loved, she came to a stand, and he thought that, having drunk her fill, she would probably return to safety. Then, all at once, he saw her slightly swaying body stiffen into attention, as if startled. Her long ears twitched nervously, as they moved backwards and forwards. A faint sound, so faint that it might have been merely the stirring of leaves in the air, came and went. That was all. Yet, vague though the warning was, it was evident that the doe sensed the approach of some hidden danger. Thunder Boy, thoroughly versed by this time in the habits of the wild creatures, knew that she would not delay to receive a second warning, and was fully prepared to see her immediately turn round and retrace her steps along the perilous path. He could scarcely believe his eyes, therefore, when he saw her, on the contrary, continue her way quickly farther out along the swamp.

On she went, never once stopping, or seeming to hesitate. At last he became so curious that he went down to the point where the doe had started her miraculous passage across; and here the miracle was explained. A trail ran plainly down to the edge of the swamp, and just where one would have expected it to stop, continued, also; as his keen eyes noted, it led right across to the farther side. . . . But did he

dare? The deer had crossed; but then a deer was a notorious treader of trails, carrying some faculty in its hoofs for avoiding dangerous places, which worked so unerringly that you were almost tempted to believe that it kept part of its brain permanently down in its feet. Moreover, it could clear great spaces by a single contraction of its leg muscles, when an instant's warning made a jump necessary, coming down with all four feet poised ready for the next movement, whatever that might happen to be. Thunder Boy's brain was almost as quick as a deer's; but the Great Spirit had given him a different sort of leg. That was all. And he loved adventure. To follow the trail across the swamp would be a new one; and the spice of danger attaching to it was an additional charm. After all, danger, in the big life of the woods, was a common thing: and if that bigness of living was not to be had without it, he would follow the big life just the same.

Directly he left the shore he felt the difference underfoot. The trail was no longer a solid thing, but yielded to the tread. Over the ooze the sphagnum fibres and roots had interlaced themselves into a mat so strong that it held like a woven fabric. Many moons had gone to that weaving before ever the trail began. But who began the trail—what daring buck or wary doe had first set foot on the weaving, and found that it held,—Thunder Boy did not ask himself, as he went farther and farther into the heart of the swamp.

The trail bent under him more and more. He had to balance as he walked. There were moments when it seemed as if the web were about to part asunder, and when the water, oozing up through the roots, made pools about his feet. But he was in the middle of the

adventure now ; and the lure of the trail kept him from turning back. Where the deer had gone, he would go. In spite of oozy depressions ; of dark whisperings ; of still darker silences of black pools which seemed to go down to the roots of the world ; in spite of the treachery of the sagging paths, and the bottomless depths of slime,—he went forward steadily with an unflinching heart.

Why did he look back ? Why does a caribou turn when its ears have caught no sound ? Why does the musk-ox pause in its feeding on the lonely barren and then melt into the distance like an antediluvian ghost ? What sends the moose's great cloven hoofs click-clicking for leagues along the frozen waste from a threatening danger which it can neither hear, see, nor scent ? What is that mysterious sixth sense which the wild peoples, human as well as beast, possess ?

When Thunder Boy turned his head in the middle of the marsh, he saw what set his pulses throbbing. There, just at the point where the trail began to cross the water, stood a large animal, bigger than the largest timber-wolf he had ever seen. The shape of its ears alone showed that it was not a wolf, for they were shorter and less pointed. As it waited, it waved its tail, which was very long and thick, slowly from side to side, and held its body in a half-crouching attitude, as it watched him keenly with its large round eyes. He had never seen such an animal before, that he could remember, and did not like the look of it. It had all the appearance of a creature made to spring upon its prey from an incredible distance, and then tear to pieces and devour. For all that, he was no coward when it came to meeting an animal suddenly face to face. To look hard, without

blinking ; to shoot out the whole force of yourself through the eyes into the wild eyes that challenged you : *this* was the secret of mastery—the old Indian medicine-power, as old as the trails themselves.

But in the present instance he was not face to face. Half the width of the swamp separated him from the challenging eyes at its edge. They seemed waiting there, to dispute the path with him, if he returned. It was perhaps just as well that he should be as far out on the swamp, after all. At any rate, it was an additional reason for not turning back.

He went forward once more. When he had gone a little distance, he looked over his shoulder. Just as he did so, he saw the animal leave the track, and come out upon the swamp. As it advanced, it placed its large furry feet deliberately, trying the bending track to find if it were safe. Yet even when it saw that Thunder Boy had turned to watch it, it did not hesitate, but came steadily on. He did not wait. The way might be dangerous in front ; but what was advancing behind might be an even greater danger. On firm ground, he might have acted differently. That was another matter. What he did now, with the unsounded depths beneath him, and the unknown menace following behind, was to take to his heels, and run !

And as he ran, the trail responded. It rose and fell, like water under the wind. It must break ! Surely, it must break ! The fibres of the sphagnum strained and pulled. Under the violent tension from the pounding feet, it seemed as if, every moment, they were about to be wrenched apart. And, the nearer the moment seemed, the faster Thunder Boy ran, because of a feverish conviction that only swiftness

could save him, not so much from the danger behind, as that which was underfoot.

He came to a point where the trail forked. He could not tell which of the two tracks to follow : he took the wrong one, and then saw, in a flash, why the trail divided. The old one, under the tread of many feet, had at last given way. A long, black pool, only partly covered with weed, lay right before him. Well for him that his backwoods training had taught him the art of pulling himself up short at a moment's notice, and of giving his body so lightning-swift a twist that its muscles could throw itself in another direction before an eyelid had time to blink ! Even as the trail began to bend beneath him towards the slimy pool, he twisted himself round and threw himself sideways on the mossy web connecting the two paths. And the next moment he was up, and running along the newer one. He kept his sight well ahead now, in case there were more holes. The new path bent and undulated like the old, but bore him as he fled. On, and still on ; swift almost as the deer that had gone before ; never once daring to take his eyes off the track, in order to look behind ;—he reached firm ground at last.

Without waiting to see if the strange animal was still following, or had gone back, he dashed into the forest. As he went, he listened hard to catch any sound that should warn him that he was being trailed. But nothing stirred.

It was very dark under the trees. The forest seemed to have a way of darkening just when what you wanted was more light ; and in the green gloom, where the eye lost itself among impenetrable thickets, there seemed always a sound of furtive movement which was never

to be caught. The farther he went, the more convinced he grew that he was being trailed. Yet, though he looked back repeatedly, he could not catch a glimpse of anything following. At last he came to a point where the trunk of a big windfall broke the path and made a fresh one necessary. When he had reached the other side, and had found the old path again, something made him look round. And there was the creature again, peering at him intently from the top of the windfall!

It was so near to him now that he could examine it in every detail, and was so fortunately placed that the sun, darting through the leaves, dappled it brightly. Its colour was a yellowish brown, with a reddish tinge where the sunlight caught the tips of the fur, and he noticed how the tawny hue shaded off into a whitish tint on the under parts of the body. As it crouched on the tree, with its powerful hind legs gathered under it, it allowed its long bushy tail, tipped with dusky brown, to hang straight down, as if with the intention of showing it off.

While he gazed at this thin-bodied, flat-sided creature, with its lithe shape and its handsome face, Thunder Boy felt more admiration than fear. It was partly the eyes which reassured him: they were wild without being cruel—at least their expression was not cruel as they gazed at *him*. So long as he kept his own fixed steadily upon the animal, and did not show any alarm, he knew that he was safe.

For a long time he did not move. But things worked in his mind. He did not say anything. He did not even put what he felt into the form of a thought. For all that, what he felt came out of him and carried an

unspoken message which, if it had been put into words, would have run :

“ I am not afraid of you. What looks out of the holes in your head is good. While you look like that, you will not harm me. *I*, also, do not wish to hurt *you* ! ”

When this message had been received, the animal was perfectly content to stare in a friendly way at its new acquaintance out of its shining eyes ; and while it stared, it waved its tail to and fro, and a sound issued from it, low, husky, and monotonous, like the purring of a cat. And so the time went on, and neither of them moved ; but behaved in exactly the same way, except that Thunder Boy did not purr, and had not a tail to wag.

At last he grew tired of doing nothing and began to move away, going slowly and quietly, keeping his eyes on the animal all the time. When he was out of sight among the trees, it jumped lightly down the windfall and followed on muffled feet.

When Thunder Boy reached the camp, he found that the sun was half-way down the afternoon and that the grandmother was preparing a dish for the evening meal.

“ You have been gone a long time,” she said. “ What have you been doing ? ”

“ I have walked over water, and met a strange beast.”

Katoya showed no surprise at a reply which she certainly had not expected.

“ Was the beast walking over the water also ? ” she asked.

“ Afterwards it did. But when it walked, I ran.”

“ And then it also ran,” Katoya remarked quietly.

Thunder Boy gazed at her with astonishment. She spoke with as much assurance as if she had been there. Only that was impossible. Yet, if she had not been there, how did she know?

"I suppose it ran," he answered thoughtfully. "It trailed me through the forest, and I looked at it for a long time. It was dark above like a wolf, and light under its belly. It had a very long tail with much fur upon it. It said things with its tail, only I do not know what things they were. *I* could have made *my* tail talk, only I didn't have one.

"I was not afraid," he said in conclusion, as if he thought his grandmother was not being sufficiently impressed.

"Did it make a noise in its throat, like this?" Katoya asked, imitating the animal so cleverly that Thunder Boy was utterly amazed. He nodded his head emphatically, too astonished to speak.

"No wonder you were not afraid!" she said, a little scornfully. "The Panther does not attack men—not even a child. It is the friend of man in the great woods. It was your mother's friend, when it saved her from the wolves."

The story of that other panther who had rescued his mother when he was too small a papoose to remember was a familiar one to Thunder Boy's ears, and had been told to him so often by Katoya when her stock of legends ran out, that it had itself acquired, by constant telling, the dignity of a legend, and formed part of the curious assortment of mythological furniture which was jumbled in his head. Yet always the panther in the legend was a medicine-panther far superior to any other; and in the absence of definite knowledge

as to what such a creature was like, Thunder Boy had created a beast in his own imagination which corresponded to no live puma that ever trailed a buck.

"Why does it not hurt?" he asked, after he had reflected a little.

"Because," Katoya said solemnly, "when the Great Spirit made the beasts, He put love of man into the heart of the Panther."

"Why did He leave it out of the others? Did they run away to hunt in the bush before they were finished?"

"The Great Spirit gave a different medicine to the others," she replied, rather severely. "I do not know why. I was not there when He put the medicines where they were to go."

"Where were you when you were not there?" he asked daringly.

If he hoped to bring his grandmother to confusion by this question, the attempt failed miserably. She answered without hesitation.

"I was under the wings of the Thunder Bird. That is where the best people sit till he has time to hatch them out."

CHAPTER XVIII

THUNDER BOY'S NEW MATE

WHEN Katoya went down to the shore to get water on the following morning very early, she saw a big panther watching her at the edge of the forest. She had no doubt that it was the same which had surprised her grandson the day before. She stood looking at it for some time without moving, and the panther, equally motionless, looked at her. Then, slowly and deliberately, she walked toward it, keeping her eyes steadily upon it all the time. When she was so close that, in another few paces, she could have touched it, she stood still again, and gazed fixedly deep into its eyes. All this time, the panther had never stirred, watching her slow advance, as if fascinated; and even now, at such close quarters, it did not appear in the least alarmed, but returned her gaze with equal intentness, out of its green-gleaming eyes. And so they stood, the woman and the beast, for what might have been a quarter of an hour according to Washington or Greenwich, but what to them was simply a thing that fell out somewhere from the middle of the moons. And in that unmeasured, and immeasurable, portion of existence, an understanding was arrived at between them, which neither of them could have possibly put into words, but which altered the whole course of their lives from that moment

onwards. Exactly what they understood, or how they arrived at it, I am not competent to say. It was just one of those strange unions of which the wilderness has many instances; one of the thousand-and-one mysteries that are for ever taking place in the world beyond man's knowledge, in there among the trees.

When Thunder Boy got up that morning, he found that the population of the camp had increased by leaps and bounds, and was a third bigger than it had been when he went to bed. And the surprising thing was that while the older portion busied itself in getting breakfast, the third part of the population sat and gazed at him calmly with a glassy-green stare, and seemed as perfectly at home as its own tail. Having already met, there was no occasion for formal introductions, and as Katoya left them entirely alone, and appeared to have eyes for nothing but the pot, Thunder Boy made advances to the new-comer in his own way, and was soon stroking its thick fur with delight. The panther's pleasure was even greater than the boy's. He responded to his caresses with the utmost delight. He lay over on his side, curving his elastic body in every direction, while his glossy fur rippled over his muscles in such subtle undulations of light and shadow that his whole body seemed to flow.

From that time onwards, Manoo was an accepted member of the little Indian family beside the Great Water. His behaviour in the camp was precisely that of a tame cat, purr and all, only that the purr, like the purrer, was twenty times as big, and, unlike an ordinary cat, he never quite grew up, but remained so much of a kitten at heart that when he could not get a game out of Thunder Boy, he would stalk a dead

stick with as much elaborate care as if it were a partridge, or make himself unspeakably ridiculous by running after his own tail. Outside the camp, he changed, in a twinkling, to a mountain lion, and became the terrible Manoo who had fought for his range-rights on the slopes of Tanook. His hunting capacities were enormous, and because he could not eat all he could kill, he was continually bringing home game of all descriptions, which, with Katoya's fishing, kept the camp supplied with food. Night was his favourite time for hunting; and he did not wait for the moon. To Manoo the darkness was no blind obscurity: it was merely a cunning shadow-robe which Night, that mighty Huntress, flung over the head of the Day. And through that woven shadow, the green-glowing fires, which, during the hours of light, slumbered deep in his head, shone with the deadly hunting-light, and pierced the thickest gloom.

Often and often Thunder Boy watched and wondered whether he could surprise the change in Manoo: all through the day a big, playful cat, and often, at noon, a drowsy one, with a fur that was deep, and deliciously soft if you wanted to pillow your head, and a deep vibrating purr for a rich husky music to send you fast asleep; and then, as the shadows lengthened, and the things that you couldn't see began to stir in the bush, a lithe thin-flanked Restlessness, which seemed to look and listen towards all quarters at once, whose cushioned feet were springy with departure, and whose eyeballs woke from blinking glassiness to deep, green jewels that glowed in a tawny gloom. And exactly when the change began, or how, Thunder Boy could never surprise the panther into giving him the slightest clue.

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the transformation was complete, and the purring kittenish cat with the sleek fur and the face that all but smiled, was the terrible mountain lion again, lord of that arrogant hunting which made even the grizzlies pause.

In spite of all this, he laboured under one mysterious drawback, the riddle of which he could never solve. Even when his stomach did its most cunning walking, and the cushioned silences touched the trail as delicately as a fawn, there were times when it seemed as if some emotional force of which he had no control, boiled over the edge of himself, and betrayed his presence. And so, before his prey had winded him, or ear or eye had given the alarm, the creature received a mysterious warning, and was three leaps away before the muscles of the panther's hind quarters had contracted to spring. Each time the thing happened, he was as bewildered as before, and would sniff all about the spot where the prey had been feeding only a moment earlier, as if to reassure his senses that it really had been there.

The thing which, of all others, Thunder Boy desired, was to accompany Manoo on one of his night expeditions. But Manoo, devoted though he had become to his little Indian mate and much as he loved the boy's society at all other times, had his own views about the sort of hunting you were likely to get with a two-footed human at your heels. So, although with his exquisite politeness, he never refused to let Thunder Boy go with him, and never gave a hint of reluctance as he ambled delicately along on the springy cushions that muffled his claws, he was so incredibly artful in

his manœuvres that, sooner or later, without having the vaguest idea how it happened, Thunder Boy always found himself alone.

How Manoo managed to disappear under his very nose, only Manoo himself could tell. To Thunder Boy the thing was a perpetual mystery which all his woodcraft was unable to solve. Over and over again, on these interrupted excursions, when everything began so promisingly, and Manoo gave the impression that at last he had overcome his prejudices about independent hunting, Thunder Boy would look with astonishment at the empty space in front of him, where the panther had trotted the very moment before, and would realize with annoyance that he had been tricked again. Apparently the only way to be sure of sticking close to Manoo was to catch hold of his tail, and never loose it for the remainder of the night. But although there was a good three feet of it, at the end of his four-foot body, and although Thunder Boy often *did* hang on to it, to the panther's huge delight, during their romps in camp, the arrangement was not quite satisfactory as a hunting device, when one of the chief necessities in stalking wary game was to be able to uncoil yourself without impediment on the instant and be your own arsenal and cannon-ball at once in a trajectory of twenty feet.

After repeated disappointments, Thunder Boy learnt his lesson and accepted defeat. What was the use of trying to "be upsides" with a creature which, a tangible panther one moment, was the thinnest of thin air the next? Only a fool would have gone on trying to catch thin air by the tail; and though Thunder Boy was quite human enough to be just a trifle conceited,

he had far too much common sense not to know when he had found his match.

So, on each occasion when Manoo had again triumphantly given him the slip, he returned to camp in a state of healthy humility.

But when Manoo wasn't bent on hunting, and Thunder Boy was in a mood to go walking in the bush, the panther rarely refused to accompany him, so long as it was clearly understood that it was nothing but a game. And then, indeed, Manoo was the most delightful of companions, teaching the boy all sorts of cunning bits of woodcraft in his own particular way. To watch Manoo stalk anything was a sheer delight. It might be only a butterfly or a fallen leaf ; but he was such a perfect actor that he appeared to exert as much patient artfulness in approaching the leaf as if it were a full-grown buck taking his midday rest. He would drop his head till his whiskers swept the grasses, crouch with the mighty springs of his hind legs bent well under him, while he very slowly waved his tail from side to side, as if to balance his mind : then, lifting one big furred paw gingerly, as if afraid of disturbing the other, would set it down with delicate precision till all the little webs of elastic skin expanded between the toes ; draw himself forward a bare six inches ; do the same with the other paw ; crouch again in breathless suspension of every muscle in his body ; repeat the whole process with the most elaborate care ; and, finally, while the entire forest seemed to wait with bated breath, would gather himself together into one compact mass of quivering nerve and fibre, and hurl two hundred pounds of exultant pantherism upon the leaf, like an elastic thunderbolt.

Thunder Boy was never tired of watching these exhibitions of Manoo's playfulness. He only regretted that Manoo could never be induced to bring some of this consummate huntsmanship to bear upon Quosk. Either he couldn't see Quosk, or else he had such a respect for that piece of hoary antiquity, who could rarely be caught napping, that he wouldn't for worlds intrude on his privacy by showing him to a boy. It was in vain that Thunder Boy crept softly down to the shore, and endeavoured by furtive nudgings and pointings, and whisperings under his breath, to make Manoo a party to the proceedings. Manoo would pad amiably after him, observing all his stealthy tiptoeings and crouchings, and stomach-walkings, with a humorous gleam in his glassy eyes, as much as to say: "We are dreadfully cunning, of course, but all that has been done much more effectively thousands of moons ago!" Or else, he would look in every direction but the right one, and be so exasperatingly stupid, that more than once Thunder Boy had all he could do not to box his ears.

"He was there! I *know* he was there!" he would say in a rebuking whisper, pointing to some secluded pool under the willows, in the approach to which he had exhausted all his art of shadow-walking without the ghost of a sound. And Manoo would gaze into the glassy depths out of his equally glassy eyes, with a look of pathetic resignation, just as if he said:

"The buffalo fish lie on the bottom here, when they don't lie somewhere else."

But occasionally, forgetting Quosk for a time, Thunder Boy could perform some bit of subtle wood-craft, which would surprise Manoo into wondering

where he had picked it up ! Only that being a part of the old Cut-bank schooling, Thunder Boy prudently kept the secret to himself, knowing instinctively that Manoo would not approve of Little Brother as a teacher, because the panther and coyote kindreds have never got on well together since the Creation—that beginning of all differences—when every separate creature had to be fitted to a tail.

CHAPTER XIX

HOW HE WENT TO FIND THE THUNDER BIRD

IT was after Manoo had settled himself down as a permanent member of Katoya's little family, and it had been finally established, once and for all, that, however mighty a hunter he might be in certain quarters, he was absolutely no good at all as a stalker of Blue Herons, that Thunder Boy decided that, if Quosk could not be considered a visible joke, he would have to be regarded in the future as an *invisible* croak. And that point being at last definitely disposed of, he turned his mind in quite another direction and determined *this*: If Quosk must remain for ever "the Night's Question," there was no reason at all why the Thunder Bird should not be induced to reveal himself as "the Day's Reply." So, one morning, very early, while Katoya was still asleep, and Manoo had not yet returned from hunting, Thunder Boy got up with extreme caution, having privately decided that this was to be the Day.

The camp was very still when he looked out. A thick mist covered the lake. You could not see more than a few yards from the shore. Inside the tepee, his grandmother made noises with her nose, also in the mist. Only, fortunately for his plan, it was foggy inside her as well as out. You could call it sleep, if you liked. It did not matter in the least what you

chose to call it. The thing that *did* matter was, that it was thick enough *inside* to hide her from herself. Usually Katoya's sleep was light enough to be disturbed by the slightest sound. That did not mean that she would actually wake. It only meant that if the sound got past the outer edge of her consciousness, and did not suggest danger, it drifted out again like thistledown on the air. And now, after so many years, Katoya had developed the power to sift the sounds—those that warned from those that were harmless—as they drifted in at the tepee-flaps of her sleep. But her powers for detecting things were not equal. For instance, she felt things that were approaching more plainly than things which were going away. It was almost as if the things that were coming nearer, sent part of themselves on ahead, and touched her before they arrived.

So now that her grandson was stealing away from her, she was not able to grope after him through the foggy obscurity that was inside her head.

In the grey light of the dawn, Thunder Boy could see that the mist was not still. It came drifting in thinner or thicker folds, with a great movement which seemed to begin somewhere in the north. The cold moist air blowing past his head chilled his face. It was not enticing to go out and seek the Thunder Bird through all that blowing dampness. Yet if he stayed till the mist cleared he knew that his grandmother would wake sooner or later and there would be things for him to do. So, very carefully picking his steps, he crept out of the tepee, and in a moment was swallowed up in the mist beyond any chance of overtaking. That is, he was safe as far as his grandmother was concerned.

With regard to Manoo, it was another matter. No one was ever safe from the following of *his* feet, on those awful cushioned silences that hid the hooked death in their claws. And the worst of Manoo was that you never could be sure of his exact whereabouts. Even when he seemed a thousand miles out of sight, there was no saying that he was not just round the corner, crouching so low along the ground, no one had the least idea he was there.

As he went on the vapour thickened but the light increased. The forest became doubly mysterious, haunted by strange movements and unfamiliar shapes. Things appeared, vanished, reappeared, in a bewildering way that made you uncertain what it was that you really saw. The thickets seemed to float and waver. Even gigantic trees, whose twisted fibres held the centuries fast knotted in their roots, seemed to stir and stagger and shift uneasily, as if a miracle had happened and they were beginning to grow feet. But whether the trees stirred or were motionless, the mist accomplished its work of magic ; so that an increasing movement seemed afoot, and you could almost declare that the forest walked.

Thunder Boy travelled on, with a growing excitement. The thought of the Thunder Bird, somewhere up there on great heights, beyond the mist, kept urging him forward. And as he went, his grandmother's words repeated themselves over and over : " The Thunder Bird is sitting with the Thunder in his Wings." And not only *in* his wings, but under them also—enormous blue-black eggs of it, out of which the lightnings were hatched, and tempests which shook the world.

If the forest peoples were moving, he saw little of them. Once, in a patch of salal bushes, he came upon a deer resting, but the creature vanished in the mist with a single bound; and once he caught sight of the long grey form of a timber-wolf which, like the deer, was instantly blotted out. After a while, the ground began to slope upward. Soon he knew he was ascending the foot of some big hill. Perhaps it was Tanook. According to his grandmother, Tanook was the mountain where all sorts of strange happenings came to pass. He had settled in his own mind that it was there that the Thunder Bird covered the blue-black eggs. As he mounted upwards, the mist grew thinner. The trees also were farther apart. Then big boulders began to appear, and there were open spaces full of stones. A little farther and there were more rocks than trees; and soon he was out on the open mountain side with the forests beneath his feet.

It was the first time that Thunder Boy had ever been high up on a great mountain, bare of trees. The strangeness and bareness of it, after the close forest country, filled him with something that was almost like fear. Now that the mist had cleared away the sun was very hot and the stony places glared. He was not used to a glare unless it came from water. His eyes were so long accustomed to the green twilights of the woods that they shrank from the hard white light reflected from the rocks. After he had climbed a long way up, he stopped to sit down and rest. He was very thirsty, and looked about him for any signs of water. Some distance to the right, under some rocks, he saw a patch of vegetation. So high up as this, it told of moisture, and possibly of a spring.

When he reached it, he found to his joy a small pool in the rock from which a tiny rivulet trickled. He drank deeply, and when he had quenched his thirst lay down beside the pool in the shadow of the rocks. And because of the heat, and the long distance he had come, and because he forgot to think about anything in particular, he was soon fast asleep.

Perhaps the Thunder Bird stretched a wing. Perhaps a startled rabbit made a wild rush for its hole. Perhaps it was neither of these, but just a bit of Tanook himself which peeled off in the heat. Whatever it was, a stone was dislodged, and came clattering down three inches from Thunder Boy's head. He was awake in an instant and rose with a start to his feet. He looked above him. There was nothing to be seen—nothing but tall, naked rocks and the treeless glare of the mountain beyond. But just because he saw nothing, he was all the more on the alert. If stones rolled, it was usually a foot which set them rolling. Bare though Tanook was, Thunder Boy guessed that more than one hunting beast had its lair among its inhospitable wastes. Again a stone came rolling down; and again, when he looked, there was nothing to be seen but the huge mass of Tanook, from whose gigantic shoulder stones had fallen for a million years. And now, beyond any doubt, he knew that something walked. Still, that was no reason why he should turn back. Even a comparatively small animal might disturb a stone, in a world of slopes and shelving ledges, where, sooner or later, everything that was loose must fall. Besides, those who set out to visit the Thunder Bird must beat stout hearts in their chests and not

let their courage falter because a stone came down. He began again to climb.

He moved very quietly, but in the hot airless stillness even his carefully set feet seemed to send abroad a whisper that went before him up the slopes. And then it was as if the whole mountain became one enormous listening ear.

Up he went, and up. There were more rocks now. The mountain was building itself into buttresses, and pinnacles, that towered steeply up towards even steeper heights. If the Thunder Bird had his nest here, it was little wonder if the eggs occasionally fell out and got smashed among the precipices, deafening the world. He knew what he should do if he found an egg which had rolled without getting broken. He would carry it carefully home, and keep it for emergencies. It would be so nice to feel you had a private storm of your own packed tight and ready for use if unpleasant persons arrived. But although he looked carefully on all sides, he came upon no eggs, still less any signs of the Thunder Bird himself. He was very high up now. When he looked back, he could see the forests far below his feet, lying away to an immense distance. And surrounded by them on all sides, stretched the great water, glimmering through the heat. Katoya was there—possibly also Manoo. But they seemed a long, long way off now, quite in another part of the world. And he was very much above indeed, far off from any help of theirs, if he should come to need it.

What was that?—A movement: a dark mass that stirred for a moment between the rocks and was gone! If *that* was the Thunder Bird, its shape was anything but bird-like, and was certainly not in the least like

what he had imagined. And yet if a dreamy hollow, so dry and barren that nothing but brown and grey lichens blotched the rocks like scabs, and where the very rocks themselves seemed splintering with the heat, was likely to provide the most suitable hatching-place for thunder, then here must be indeed the chosen eyrie of that very thunderous fowl!

He went very cautiously towards the place where he had seen the thing disappear. Yet when he reached the spot, there was nothing. And as he stood in that solitary place, where there was neither breath, sound, nor movement, and where the very air was stagnant with heat, an uneasiness grew in him which turned at last to fear. Something was there, he was certain, hidden among the rocks. Round the next corner, if he moved, he might come upon it. If it proved to be indeed the Thunder Bird, what hope of escape could he expect in a place so shelterless, under the swoop of terrible wings?

He was warned. The mysterious warning which tells the wild things of danger, came to him unmistakably now, urging him to go back. If only he had obeyed! But intense curiosity was stronger in him even than his fear. He had come so far to see the Thunder Bird. And he wanted so badly to boast to his grandmother of the exploit. It would be cowardly now to turn back with the thing he had come to see just round the next rock.

His heart beat fast. He had a curious feeling at the roots of his hair. But he went forward, and peered round the corner of the rock. As he did so, there was a deep, rumbling growl, and he found himself face to face with Okonoopo, the famous grizzly bear.

Thunder Boy had seen bears before—brown bears, black bears, even a grizzly or two—but never a grizzly such as this. He was so large and cumbrous-looking that he seemed like a piece of the mountain itself done into fur. But Thunder Boy was not deceived by his air of slow cumbrosity, if so it may be called. For he knew that once a grizzly gets into motion, you need a very quick pair of legs indeed to keep out of his way.

The great creature glaring sulkily at him now out of his little pig-like eyes, had made himself a terrible fame throughout Tanook and all its outlying slopes.

His reputation for strength and cunning had travelled far and wide among the beasts. And if Katoya had been in familiar country, she too would have known of the great grizzly, whose range no other animal except Manoo had ever dared to dispute.

Now, as Thunder Boy had often heard, the most dangerous thing about a grizzly is the uncertainty of what he will do. For the mind of a grizzly is not that of an ordinary bear. But one thing is sure, and that is, when once a grizzly has made up his mind, he wastes no time in further thinking, but acts upon his decision in a flash. In the present case, Thunder Boy didn't need any previous information about grizzly ways of doing things to know that *this* grizzly was very quickly working himself up into a bad temper. It was not only the little angry points of light that glittered in the hollows of his huge head, nor the attitude in which the great body was poised ready to hurl itself with all its force, which warned him of what was taking place: it was something which seemed to issue from the bear's very soul, and shoot itself at him before the

body rushed. For a moment or two, Thunder Boy stood perfectly still, looking straight into the animal's angry little eyes. Then he gradually moved backwards, inch by inch, holding the grizzly with a fixed gaze. His retreat was very slow, very quiet ; because he knew that in dealing with a savage animal, any sudden movement will aggravate its state of mind. Nevertheless, it was very plainly a retreat ; and although Thunder Boy only intended it to express a reluctance to annoy, the grizzly took it as a sign of weakness in a retiring foe. It did not satisfy him that the foe was going, for that meant the possible escape out of his clutches of a creature which, being human, he would take the very greatest possible pleasure in tearing limb from limb.

A deep, husky growl, rumbled in his vast chest. Thunder, this indeed !—thunder of a different sort from that which the boy had come to find.

He did not wait for a second peal. With one of those swift movements which only a life in the wilderness can teach, he sprang backward and darted behind the rocks.

With a snarling roar, which was half a bellow, the grizzly hurled himself in pursuit.

And now Thunder Boy ran with all the swiftness that was in him ; ran as if all the quick-footed ancestors of this half-Indian blood were running in his legs. He was in a strange place and could not tell the best way to take. Yet he did not rush in a blind panic. His eyes were as busy as his legs, searching on every side for the surest means of escape. It was not necessary for him to keep turning round to see that the bear was in hot pursuit. He felt, rather than saw, the storm

of fur and fury that swept like an avalanche down the mountain side.

At first he kept straight downwards in the vague hope that he might be able to reach the edge of the forest before the grizzly caught him up, but after a little he realized that this was impossible, owing to the terrific pace at which the bear was moving. Besides which, a precipice immediately below him, made it necessary for him to alter his course to one along the mountain, either to the right or the left. Which? It was a choice of life or death, with not a moment to decide. He wheeled to the right, not knowing why. Above him the steep, rocky slopes: below, the precipice; in front, to his horror, a deep gully which could not be crossed in time. He turned to the steeps above with a sinking heart, knowing that the bear was gaining rapidly and would use every effort to drive him away from the lower slopes. He heard the scrambling rush over the rocky surfaces behind, as the great body propelled itself upwards by main force, scattering the loose stones far down into the gulfs below.

The boy's breath began to shorten. He snatched it in panting gasps. The rocks had cut through his moccasins and torn his feet. There was blood now on the trail.

The scent of the fresh blood increased the grizzly's rage. Already, in anticipation, he tasted his prey. And as the distance between him and it grew less, his little piggish eyes flamed with desire. No matter how steep the slopes, the great muscles of his hind quarters urged his huge carcass ceaselessly upwards.

Thunder Boy looked round him in despair. All about him was the scarred and splintered ruin of the

mountain side,—rocks piled on rocks with stony hollows between, yet never one into which he could creep and be out of reach of his destroyer !

Suddenly, to his right, he saw a ledge that led along the precipitous side of a deep gully. It was of fair width at the beginning but narrowed rapidly. On ahead, at its narrowest, it looked as if it would not be wide enough to allow the bear to pass. What it led to farther along, he could not see. But it was his only chance.

The bear was close upon him now. A few more bounds and all would be over. Thunder Boy ran right along the ledge without stopping. He did not even slacken his pace as it narrowed, because he knew that a moment's delay might be fatal ; but he did not dare to look down. When he had got beyond the point which he hoped the bear would not be able to pass, he saw that the ledge came to an end abruptly.

He looked back. The grizzly was already coming quickly along the ledge, cutting off all possible chance of escape in that direction. In front, there was not even foothold sufficient for a mountain sheep. Below, the precipice plunged, five hundred feet of naked rock.

The bear came to the narrowing of the ledge and paused, as if measuring the space at his disposal before he could reach the broader platform where the boy crouched with his shoulder against the rock. It was evident that he did not altogether like the look of the path, for he lowered his head to it, sniffing at it suspiciously, as if to assure himself of its width by his nose as well as his eyes. Very slowly he advanced, foot by foot, then, as the space grew narrower still, inch by inch,

Thunder Boy, crouching at the farther end of the platform, watched, breathlessly, the huge body, as it came gradually nearer, leaning its bulk inwards towards the rock.

The grizzly had reached the narrowest part now. It almost looked as if it would succeed in passing the danger-point. His body was flattened to its utmost. It was amazing how such a width of chest, by a careful adjustment of the shoulders, could compress itself and still allow the muscles free play. . . .

Now, the huge forepaws stretched themselves cautiously out, one after the other, as if measuring the last few fatal inches ; the body meanwhile crushed against the shelving rock, as if, by its enormous weight alone, it could force the mountain back.

With the fascination of horror, Thunder Boy watched the movements of the muscles under the fur of that shaggy robe, which was now indeed, for him, the very robe of death.

Slowly—so slowly as to be only just visible—the great body squeezed its way a few inches farther, then paused in momentary suspense, with all its muscles taut. It only needed another inch of room for the thing to be accomplished safely. If the mountain would not yield a fraction of the inch, the bear must shrink to the stern measurement or fail. Thunder Boy's existence hung trembling on that inch.

The midday sun beat powerfully on the rock, so that to lean against it was to lean against a furnace. Yet both the bear and boy appeared to be beyond the reach of heat.

CHAPTER XX

THE RESCUE

THE heat possessed the world. Every living thing seemed to have crept out of its glare and to lie motionless in the shade. No sound : no movement. Whatever life the mountain held appeared centred on that narrow shelf of rock, where life and death were poised.

But what was that, drifting shadow-like across the shadeless glare? Its movement was lithe, sinewy ; a flow of unseen muscles under a rippling tawny fur. On the vast surfaces of the mountain it looked unimportant enough, for all its supple ease of motion. What was it doing there, drifting softly over the pastureless precipices like the ghost of a shrunken coyote? And its swift advance was betrayed by no sound. If it indeed moved with a beast's footing, then its feet were muffled in silence like the down of an owl's wing.

It was within a hundred yards of the ledge now ; yet the bear, with his face towards his prey, saw nothing. And he was so intent upon his purpose that he received no warning of the deadly peril bearing down upon him behind. But over the grizzly's shoulders, Thunder Boy caught sight of it, and his heart bounded.

The grizzly had almost passed the danger-point. If nothing happened to disturb him during the next

moment or two, that huge bulk would have flattened itself past the point, and the platform would be gained. All the force of his mind and body being intent upon the problem under his nose and along his ribs, he could scarcely be expected suddenly to grapple with another in the direction of his tail. Yet that was exactly where the new problem presented itself.

A snarling cry that was half a scream sounded a challenge behind and made him stop instantly. It was not the first time in his life that he had heard that thrilling note, nor was his experience of him who could utter it such that he could afford to treat it lightly. But he could not meet the threatened danger without facing it; and to face it, it would be necessary to turn round, which, in his present position, was clearly impossible. Either he must continue to advance or retreat with his back towards the foe. The latter course did not commend itself to one who was reluctant to leave exposed to merciless punishment that portion of his person upon which, for the last ten seasons, he had been in the habit of sitting down. So, with desperate caution, he risked the danger of the precipice and, flattening himself along the last perilous inches, passed safely out at last on to the platform. Without wasting a moment on his prey, he wheeled round to meet his unexpected foe.

To the panther the narrowness of the ledge offered no difficulty. That slim body would have been at home on a mere ridge of rock. Already he was at the spot the grizzly bear had passed with such infinite precaution, and stood in a half-crouching position, with his ears laid along his head and his lips curled back from his gleaming fangs. Anything more threatening

than his expression could not possibly be imagined. The big grizzly, courageous, and fully conscious of his great strength, as he was, knew that now he was pitted against a foe whose powers as a fighter made him, of all others, except man, the one most to be dreaded.

The bear was full of anger. For there was not the least doubt in his mind that it was no mere lust for fighting which had brought his hereditary enemy upon him, but a determination to baulk him of his prey. And to have it snatched from him now, after such strenuous efforts to reach it, was a thing that lashed his resentment to a pitch of uncontrollable fury.

The two savage creatures faced each other with death in their eyes. Thunder Boy had risen when the bear reached the platform and stood with one hand pressed convulsively against the rock, while the other clutched his hunting-knife, as he bent forward in an agony of hope and fear. What would happen now? Would the panther launch his attack upon the bear where he was, or endeavour by cunning feints to lure him forward so as to battle with him on the brink of the perilous ledge? Seeing how both animals belonged to races noted for the unexpectedness of their actions, it was impossible to say. All he could be sure of was that it would be a fight to the finish, and that his own fate hung trembling in the balance.

He was not left long in doubt. With a second screech, more piercingly shrill than the first, Manoo sprang. But not on the grizzly. He was too experienced a fighter to risk the embrace of those terrible forelegs. With a prodigious leap of which only a mountain lion was capable, he soared clean over the bear and landed between him and Thunder Boy. The

astonished bear turned instantly, in order to meet the attack. And then began a fight, the like of which for ferocity and swiftness the boy had never seen. Over and over again the panther sprang, each time inflicting a wound upon his huge opponent. The platform was not spacious enough for him to take advantage of his marvellous elasticity to the full, but of sufficient width to allow him to spring from side to side, backwards or forwards, with bewildering quickness. Not that he always recovered himself from these lightning-quick attacks without damage ; for the bear, in spite of his size, could deliver a punishing blow almost as swiftly as his opponent, and whenever one of the mighty paws struck Manoo staggered.

As the fight progressed, now on one side, now on the other, Thunder Boy's position grew more precarious. At first, it raged at the end of the platform, nearest to the ledge, but by degrees it rolled farther and farther in his direction. It soon became evident to him that the grizzly, though forced time after time to retreat before his enemy's furious onset, was gradually making his way nearer and nearer with a dogged persistence. It was in vain that Manoo rushed, leaped, and appeared at times almost to twist himself in the air. Always the great body with the bloody robe had so placed itself at the end of each manœuvre that it was a little closer to the boy than before. There were times when it seemed as if the panther failed to make any real headway ; and then, when Thunder Boy saw the grizzly's giant form raised on its haunches with the murderous forepaws poised for action, and the red light of battle flaming in its eyes, his heart would sink, as he realized that between him and this towering fury there was

nothing but a thin-bodied, crouching creature which seemed to shrink in proportion to its antagonist's enormous size. And if Manoo should be beaten?

Who could tell but in some fearful crisis of the struggle, near the brink of the precipice, he might misjudge the distance during one of his leaps, and not recover himself in time? And if that happened the boy knew that his own fate was sealed. No second saviour could possibly rescue him then. He would be folded in the grizzly's pitiless embrace: and the world would end!

And sometimes, when the two animals, locked together in deadly grapple, rolled over and over in a seething, snarling, screeching mass, smothered in fur and blood, it looked as if the end were indeed approaching and that the panther could never survive. And then the boy would cry dumbly in an agony of dread, though not a sound would issue through his tightly clenched teeth.

But in that thin-flanked, beautiful being which looked at moments as if it could be bent this way or that, with the utmost ease, or crushed till every atom of breath was out of its body, there lay a reserve of strength and elastic resistance which enabled it to return again and again to the attack with undiminished fury. But it was not that alone which made it the most terrible enemy which the bear had yet encountered. Those eyes which blazed with green fire burnt with something deeper and fiercer than any mere hereditary hate, passed down through countless grizzly and panther generations. Manoo was fighting for no mere victory over a hereditary foe, but for the life of a creature which he loved with all the deep affection of his wild panther soul.

Not for himself his blood flowed, or those ringing screams rent the air with unearthly peals that flung their thrilling cadences far and wide among the burning hollows of the rocks. To touch *his* body was to rouse a savageness of anger which made him rightly dreaded among the forest peoples ; but to threaten harm to a human being whom he had taken under his special care, was to unleash within him such a whirlwind of uncontrollable passion that not the boldest grizzly living could withstand it in the end.

And because the bear was now much nearer to the boy than before, the panther's storm of passion was at its height. If the grizzly had been wise, he would have backed to the ledge while he could have beaten a retreat with honour. But in one of his rushes, he came so close that Thunder Boy had to step back quickly to escape being knocked down. That was enough. There was an ear-splitting screech ; and what descended on the grizzly was no ordinary panther, but a fanged whirlwind, a clawed tempest of tawny fur. The two animals rolled over in a writhing, snarling, interlocked mass, leaving a momentary clear space between them and the rock. Thunder Boy seized the moment and darted past, never stopping to look back until he had reached the farther end of the ledge. Then he saw what was the finish of the fight.

When the grizzly closed in the last grapple, he exerted all his remaining force, but even *his* great strength was unavailing against the overwhelming onslaught of his opponent. He might indeed try to hug that flat-sided body with a fierce embrace ; but the panther's javelin-like teeth were in his throat, and its strong hooked claws seemed as if they would tear the very eyes out of his

head and the heart out of his side. With a roar of mingled pain and anger he loosed his grip, and, by a violent effort, wrenched himself free.

Without waiting for his foe to attack again, he made a rush to gain the ledge. But the panther was too quick for him. With one of his tremendous bounds he reached the end of the platform, and there, quivering with undiminished rage, he crouched, defiantly lashing his long tail from side to side, as if daring his adversary to come on. But for the present, the bear had no desire to renew the struggle. Great bully that he was, he had at last found his match, and though he wanted badly to wreak his thwarted vengeance on the hated little human who had just escaped, he had no stomach to face his protector who crouched snarling just where the ledge narrowed and held the perilous path. So he contented himself by glaring savagely at his enemy, while his temper did not lessen in sourness by watching Thunder Boy's figure getting smaller and smaller, as it travelled rapidly along the mountain side.

For a considerable time, Manoo held his place; partly to rest himself after the fight, partly to allow Thunder Boy plenty of time to escape. Every time the bear moved as if to advance, Manoo bared his teeth in so threatening a manner, that the grizzly thought better of it and hung back. But at length Manoo, having looked back and seen that Thunder Boy was nowhere in sight, turned and ran along the ledge. He did not wait to watch if the bear managed to recross it in safety. He knew that the bully had had so severe a lesson, that he would think twice before attempting to follow. So he left him to growl angrily to himself while he licked his wounds, and did his best to recover

his dignity after such a signal defeat. Thus there were no eyes to watch the big body, as it once more flattened itself along the narrowness, foot by foot, and at last crawled back to its den among the rocks decidedly the worse for wear !

When Thunder Boy returned home and told his grandmother of the great fight, she listened in silence till he had finished. And as Manoo was there, licking his wounds and showing plainly that he had had a severe mauling, she had no reason to think that the boy was drawing on his imagination. When he had done, she did not speak at once ; for that was not her way. But, as always, on speaking her mind, she said things to be remembered.

“ The grizzlies are a folk it is wise to leave alone. Sometimes they will not harm you, if you know how to make the right sort of medicine ; but when one is bad, he is more evil than any other beast. You should not have gone to seek the Thunder Bird. The Thunder Bird would not be pleased. It is very likely that he told the grizzly to chase you away. The great Spirits do not like to be visited. They are there behind the trees, or among the high rocks, and may appear to you while you sleep, or when you sit, and are very still. But it displeases them when a man tries to look at them from curiosity and to carry back a tale. See Manoo. He would know better than to offend the Spirits ; yet now, because you must be foolish, he is covered with wounds.”

This pointing to Manoo had more effect upon Thunder Boy than any of the rest of his grandmother's speech. He was very sorry for Manoo. It pained him to think that he should have suffered so much on his

account. As he watched him licking the terrible places, and making a low complaining noise now and then, when his tongue hurt them, he felt an unhappy place deep inside himself where, no matter how it was sore, his own tongue could never reach. Yet he could do nothing ; for he knew that when a wild creature is busy attending to its injuries, it will not bear to be touched even by the kindest hands. Yet he wanted to let Manoo know that he was sorry, and that he would have comforted him if he could. So he sat close to him and made medicines with his voice, gurgling companionable noises in his throat, such as he thought came as near panther understanding as was possible. If Manoo was any the better for these gurglings, it was difficult to say. He appeared to pay very little attention to them, and after he had licked himself for a very long time he did the next best thing under the circumstances, curled himself up and went to sleep.

CHAPTER XXI

KATOYA GOES A JOURNEY

THE Fall had come, and there were rumours on the air. It was a time of journeying and preparation ; of Wings out of the North by day and Voices out of the North by night. Grouse and ptarmigan issued from their summer coverts and started to feed on berry patches in open places. The wolves took to haunting the margins of marshes and ponds where, when the sunset burned on the lonely waters, they sank their greedy bellies craftily into the reeds ; for now the geese and ducks began to arrive in their thousands ; and the plover, in countless hordes, darkened the air from Labrador. And hidden from all eyes, the Cold-Maker, like a great artist, mixed his colours in the paint-pots of decay, and splashed the sombre landscape with crimson and scarlet and gold.

But in spite of change and restlessness and splendour of decay—the steady things that always happened went on happening, of which Hunger was one. And the fishers went to fish. On this particular morning two tremendous fishers were busy in the lake. Quosk was one and Katoya was the other. The results were very much the same, though the methods were different ; for, whereas Katoya got her prey artfully by means of a fish-hook made out of the thigh-bone of a hare, Quosk

fished with *himself*, so to speak, and used nothing but his bill.

He would stand on one long stick of a leg where the shadowy water was just the right depth, so that his unsuspecting prey saw nothing but a stick which seemed to grow up from the oozy bottom ; and there he would wait without motion or sign of life, with his neck curled back, and his head sunk artfully down on his shoulders, as if he were heavy with sleep. And woe to any fish, pollywog, frog, or even musk-rat, who swam close enough to the leg to come within striking distance of the deadly javelin up above. Only a glint in the half-closed eyes, only a down-thrust, swift as lightning, and strong as the forefoot of a moose, and the luckless victim's swimming days were over for ever, and his funeral took place in the upper air.

Lonely though he seemed, Quosk was perfectly aware that he was not the only fisher on the lake. But as the Indian woman always kept to her own reach, and never invaded his, he tolerated her share of a fishing ground so ancient that it went back to the Flood.

So, she with the hare's thigh-bone, and he with the terrible bill, divided the sport between them and fished to their hearts' content.

When Katoya had finished her fishing, and had returned to the camp, she found that Thunder Boy was no longer there. But she was not surprised. He continually rambled off by himself, and now that the neighbourhood had become familiar, so that its landmarks were known, she let him go and come pretty much as he liked. But when the morning passed away and he did not arrive, she began to wonder what he was doing.

All at once she saw him running among the trees. And by the way he ran, she knew that something had happened.

"Indians!" he said, speaking rapidly, as he rushed into camp. "There are many of them. They are travelling quickly. And they have a pale-face with them, though his face is not pale."

Katoya gave her grandson a searching look.

"How do you know he is a pale-face?" she asked.

"Because its shape was a pale-face shape," he answered promptly. "And he was going with his body as a pale-face goes."

"Were you near enough to see his face?" Katoya asked.

"Yes. I was hiding in the bushes and the faces came so close I was afraid. It was a wider face than an Indian's, and it smiled with its eyes."

Again Katoya looked at him with a peculiar expression. Unconsciously, in describing the white man's face he had described his own.

"Which way did they go?" she asked.

Thunder Boy pointed to the north-west.

When she had inquired closely the exact place where he had seen them pass, she became silent, and he could tell that she was thinking deeply. Presently, she began to make preparations as if for a journey. He asked her if they were going away.

"I go alone," she said. "You shall stay here till I return. If I do not return by the time the sun sets to-morrow, do not be anxious. If I do not return the day after, you will know that I am following a two days' trail. If I have not returned when the sun has set for the fourth time, you will know that the trail is

very long. But do not fear. I shall not come back till I have seen what I go to see."

"And Manoo?" Thunder Boy asked, looking at the panther as he sat licking his fur.

"Manoo stays here," she answered. "I do not take Manoo."

Thunder Boy knew it was useless to ask his grandmother to let Manoo and himself accompany her on this uncertain journey of which she could not tell the length. Her manner alone was sufficient to warn him that the undertaking was to be a mystery, and that any questions or arguments would only rouse her displeasure.

When she had finished her scanty preparations, she lost no time in saying good-bye. She merely repeated her instructions to her grandson not to leave the camp on any account till her return, and then, without another word, struck into the forest and was immediately lost to view.

Thunder Boy stood some time, looking at the point where his grandmother had disappeared, and wondering what new mystery was in the wind. All he could suggest to himself as the reason for her sudden departure was that she was uneasy at his account of the strangers, and that she had gone to satisfy herself that they had left the neighbourhood for good.

Now that she had gone, the camp suddenly became very lonely. The silence of the afternoon was a silence that seemed to fold many things which were quiet now, but which presently would move. There was not a ripple on the lake; not a breath among the trees. He was used to being by himself in the forest, but that

was quite a different thing to being left by himself in the camp.

He turned to find comfort in Manoo. The panther responded immediately and turned over on his back, sparring playfully with his paws, and purring loudly as he did so. Thunder Boy delighted in Manoo when he was in this playful mood, and the two often passed whole hours romping together; but to-day the romp soon came to an end, and Thunder Boy remembered that he was in charge of the camp. There was not very much to be in charge of, certainly, for the tepee was very small. True, there was the camping outfit; but as this mainly consisted of one old iron cooking-pot, a tin mug, two blankets, and a cow-horn spoon, it did not represent a vast amount of valuable real estate, though no one could dispute the real cow-horn of the spoon. Such as it was, however, it was advanced civilization, compared with the barbarities of life as practised by those who possessed neither iron pot nor tin mug; and was, after all, the sole wealth which, apart from their clothes and weapons, he and his grandmother possessed in the world, always excepting the canoe. The canoe, of course, was worth everything else put together, since it was that alone which made them free of the vast world of waters which washed the undiscovered lands. Whatever happened to anything else, *that* must be protected at all costs. So, in spite of the fewness of the things left under his care, Thunder Boy felt very responsible, as he sat still after his romp was over, and wondered how long his grandmother would stay away. He began to ask Manoo the questions which he had not ventured to ask her.

“Why has she gone, Manoo?”

For answer, Manoo, who had begun to tidy up with his tongue the ruffled places in his fur, raised his head as if surprised at the question and looked aggravatingly wise. Then he resumed his licking, as if it were not worth his while to reply. But Thunder Boy was not going to be put off by Manoo's dumb show of superior knowledge. He repeated the question in a more emphatic tone.

This time the panther lifted his head in real astonishment. And his manner so very plainly said, "I really am surprised at your asking such a foolish question twice," that Thunder Boy began to feel rather small. However, as he had no intention of letting Manoo perceive the slightest sign of shrinkage, he continued as if he were even larger than he was.

"I shall not leave the camp until she comes back."

The panther's attitude was as if he had said :

"Nobody asked you to."

"You must stay also," Thunder Boy said severely.

If Manoo did not actually wink, one eye looked as if it had a slight tendency to close. However, as he opened it again to its fullest extent in its wide glassy sort of stare, it might have been merely a twitching of the muscles. He *could* have replied, "I shall please myself entirely whether I go or stay"; but it wouldn't have been polite; and whatever Manoo did, or did not do, his manners were always beyond reproach. Also, he never said—as he equally might—"I am perfectly well aware that I've been left behind to look after *you*!" but he politely kept the knowledge bottled up behind his unfathomable glassy eyes, and looked as simple as a kitten which has only just been born.

It might well be asked how he should have had this knowledge, since Katoya had never said a word to him when she went away, only just before she was going, and with so slight a pause that it was hardly noticeable, she had shot a look at him which pierced deep down into the centre of his brain. A slow-witted or stupid person might have mistaken its meaning. But Manoo was not that sort of person, and he did not make mistakes. He was not particularly anxious to remain doing nothing in the camp ; because, although he was devoted to Thunder Boy, he would always rather go with those who took the trail, than lick his fur to pass the time with those who stayed at home. However, Katoya's will was a law he never disputed, and communications passed between them in an instinctive way which did not waste its energy in words.

So, when he had finished tidying himself up, he leaped lightly up to the rocky platform at the side of the creek, and, sitting down on the edge of it, sent the glare of his glassy green eyes as far out into the world as he could, and went on looking aggravatingly wise.

There was no use for Thunder Boy to pretend that he wasn't glad that Manoo was there. He wasn't nervous at being left by himself. Not he ! He wasn't in the least lonely. Not he ! It was the lake that seemed such a lonely stretch of whispering water ; too large and desolate ever to have seemed a mere pool for the convenience of the nursery in the hemlock, where Father Heron went to fish. And it was the forest, which, now that Katoya had been swallowed up in its cavernous glooms, seemed so full of some secret which it was always holding back. And when the afternoon got yellower and yellower, and the evening light began

to thicken under the trees, he grew less and less inclined to regard Manoo as a nuisance, or to wish him anywhere but where he was. But that wasn't because he was in the least little bit lonely. Not at all ! When night came, and he had gone to his couch of pine-branches in the cabin, Manoo coiled himself up compactly just outside the door, with his tail over his nose to shelter it from the dew. But though his eyes were shut and his nose covered, his ears remained open and were perhaps the part of him that was least asleep.

CHAPTER XXII

INTO THE HANDS OF THE ENEMY

KATOYA did not return the next day, nor the next. The third day came and still she did not come. The morning was one of those golden spaces of Indian summer, which made the Fall such a glory of deceitfulness that it was impossible to believe that the blizzards lay in ambush under its yellow robe.

As the day wore on, Thunder Boy grew restless. It was true that Katoya had told him that if she had not returned on the fourth day, he was not to be anxious, as it would only mean that the trail had been long. A foreboding sense of danger drawing near weighed more and more heavily upon him as the day declined. But if the danger approached, it gave neither sound nor sign of its stealthy advance. Even when the alder-leaves stirred a little on the eastward side of the creek, as a dark face peered through their slightly parted stems, he never received the warning, because he was looking another way. And, although Manoo was usually so much on the alert that it seemed as if not a leaf could fall without his knowledge, his glassy eyes were half shut in a doze as he basked in the glow of the yellow afternoon.

Suddenly he leaped to his feet and gazed towards a certain point in the huge wall of the trees. And then, a little later, Katoya came into view.

She brought great news. She had found the camp of the Indians she had gone to seek. They belonged to the great tribe of the Moosebills, famous throughout the west. Moreover, she had seen the white man in their midst, and was certain that he was Thunder Boy's pale-face father, who had been lost to sight for so many years. To-morrow, she said, she would go back to the Moosebills, and take Thunder Boy with her, for she was sure that his father was regarded as a great medicine-man by the Indians, and would have much influence with the tribe.

The idea of having a pale-face father, and of going a journey next day to meet him, was so extremely exciting that it was a long time before Thunder Boy could go to sleep. When he did, he had strange dreams of a parent so very pale that his face was like a cloud filled by the moon, and who sat in a medicine-lodge with wooden sides, exactly like Kennedy's, and where, indeed, Kennedy lurked in the corner under the clock, ready to do something dreadful, but of whose presence the pale parent remained obstinately unconscious in spite of Thunder Boy's frantic efforts to make him realize the danger.

Katoya, too, was restless. Now that she had discovered the boy's father, and was about to convince him by producing the boy himself, she had misgivings that perhaps she had done something of which she would repent. Who could tell whether, if once the white man accepted his son, he would not take charge of him entirely and refuse to allow her to look after him any more? Or suppose the Indians, who had kept the white "medicine-man" with them so long, refused to let him return to his people, and kept his son a captive also! To part with the boy now, after all

they had gone through together, would break her heart. For, in spite of her outer sternness, and general toughness of fibre, Katoya loved her grandson with all the strength of her soul. They had been very happy alone in their wilderness life, hidden away from the world, with the beasts, and the birds, and the trees. And now everything would change. The world, white and red, would be let in upon them, and nothing would ever be the same. It was not too late to change her mind now, she thought. She might take the boy with her still deeper into the wilderness, and so—father or no father—keep him for evermore. And as she perplexed her brain with many thoughts, looking out from her couch of fir branches into the moonlit night, suddenly she saw a figure pass rapidly from one tree to another.

If Katoya had not been so wide awake, she might have imagined that she dreamed what she saw. But she was too fully in possession of her senses, and the moonlight outside was too clear for her to doubt for the moment the evidence of her eyes.

She rose softly so as not to disturb Thunder Boy and crouched down at one side of the entrance of the tepee. Then she waited. The time went on. Nothing happened. Yet she did not abate one jot of her vigilance. She had seen an Indian's figure. That was enough. If need be, she would watch till dawn.

She heard the cackle of a Sora Rail in the dense rushes beyond the creek; while, far overhead, there came at intervals the whistle of a pair of night-hawks, as they smote with rapid plumes the invisible harp-strings of the air.

There were many shadows and half-lit spaces where shapes lurked uncertainly, and might, or might not,

contain life. Katoya, with an Indian eye for light and shadow, sorted out the shapes. Suddenly, a new shadow appeared where none had been before. It was thrown from a point close to the tepee, on the right. Crouching, as she did, on the same side, she could not see the object which cast it. But she saw what was equally important: *she saw the shadow move*. It advanced stealthily, a few inches at a time. Not the faintest whisper of sound accompanied its progress. Whoever its maker was, he was shod with the moccasins of deadliest silence. All at once, a long, demoniac peal of laughter rang out, as a loon's unearthly voice startled the moonlit levels of the lake. After this interruption, the shadow remained stationary for a while and then came creeping on. When it had reached the full length of a man's figure, the figure itself stood almost touching the entrance of the tepee.

Katoya did not move a muscle; she hardly dared to breathe. In the intense stillness the quiet breathing of Thunder Boy beside her seemed to fill the tepee with sound. And while she waited in breathless suspense, the figure in the doorway was as motionless as she.

The moments passed. It seemed a long time since the figure had stood there. Then—did it move ever so slightly, coming a finger's-breadth farther towards the opening into the tepee? She could not be certain that her eyes detected it, but, with her whole sense, she *knew*!

From force of long habit, Katoya never went to bed unarmed. Sleeping or waking, the leather sheath, ornamented with elk's teeth, hung always at her belt, and in that sheath, like a wolf in its lair, lay the long blade of her hunting-knife, darkened with many a stain.

She watched the shape enlarge till it half filled the entrance. Then it stooped in order to look into the tepee, and the moonlight at that angle fell full upon its face.

In a flash, the squaw recognized that her deadliest enemy was so close that she could touch him with her hand.

He advanced his head a little farther, so that his face ceased to be illuminated. But the moonlight glanced instead on the tomahawk grasped in his right hand.

The weapon left her no doubt as to his murderous errand. He intended to kill her first and then capture the boy. By his hesitation it was plain that he was endeavouring to make out exactly in what part of the tepee she was sleeping. He advanced again and now stood actually inside, peering all around the shadowy interior, until he could dimly make out the couch with the slumbering boy upon it. With the tomahawk raised, he moved in that direction.

Some wild animals make their final spring with a scream ; others in deadly silence. All the wild animal in the squaw's nature rose rampant in this last supreme moment. It was as if the brutal instincts of long-buried, half-beast ancestors woke into savage life, and swept howling down upon her like a wolf-pack in full cry. She could strike well in her own defence, and, even to a full-grown warrior, be no mean foe. But against him who dared to threaten this child, whose love was the very life-blood of her soul, she would strike with the force of a thousand furies, although the howling of the wolf-pack was strangled in her throat to a noise between a grunt and a snarl.

Scar-face heard the low snarl behind him and swung

himself round, striking swiftly. But whereas he struck blindly, Katoya struck with precision. If it had not been for his quick movement, no second plunge would have been needed. As it was, his face would carry a second scar to his dying day. He was so completely taken off his guard by the squaw's secret attack, that, striking out wildly once more, he bounded out of the tepee, and made off into the forest as fast as he could run.

Fortunately for Katoya, his first blow had only given her a slight wound, and his second had been struck at such random that it had missed her altogether.

The fight, if fight it could be called, had lasted so short a time that Thunder Boy was scarcely fully awake before it was over and Scar-face was in flight. When he asked Katoya what had happened she merely replied :

“ A visitor who has just gone came to see if I was in good health. He now knows that my health is very good, but that my sleep is not always sound. There is nothing to alarm you. You had better go to sleep again.”

That was all she said ; yet the boy knew well enough that her joking figure of speech concealed some great peril which they had just escaped. It was not likely after this that he could settle himself again to sleep. The very fact that his grandmother concealed the truth from him made him all the more certain that danger was afoot. He lay down, however, because he knew there was nothing he could do. Katoya sat in the doorway, and neither spoke nor moved. He could see her as a black outline against the moonlit space. Slowly the moon sank in the west, and the shadows crept eastwards. The air grew colder as the night

waned. Yet Katoya remained at her post, sorting the shadows, till the east grew grey with dawn. And under the brightening sky, the man with the double scar on his face carried the news of the hated medicine-woman to the camp of her enemies, the Snakes.

The sun had not long risen above the eastern hills when Katoya and Thunder Boy started on their journey. There was no doubt in the squaw's mind now as to what she ought to do. The event of the night had decided her. Knowing Scar-face as she did, she was well aware that he would never rest till he had gratified his revenge, and that his defeat at her hands would only goad him to further efforts. Nothing but his death would ever free her from the danger threatening her as long as he tainted the trails with his evil feet. So, once again, she was driven against her will to seek for her grandson a protection more powerful than her own.

To Thunder Boy's sorrow, they were forced to start without Manoo. The panther had left the camp immediately after the squaw's return to go off hunting; and as his hunting often took him to long distances, there was no telling when he would return. To comfort the boy, Katoya assured him that Manoo would follow them for certain, when he had found the trail. Thunder Boy was obliged to be satisfied with that, although he wondered uneasily how Manoo would find them if he did not strike the trail till the scent had become stale, and in many places had ceased to lie.

After a while, they left the country with which he was familiar in the neighbourhood of the camp, and continued in a westerly direction towards the mountains. They travelled steadily on till noon, and then halted by a stream to drink and rest. All this time there had

been no sign of Manoo. Thunder Boy had cast many backward looks, hoping against hope to see the panther's lithe body come swinging into view. But always, his anxious gaze met nothing but the heavy shadows of the trees.

The path Katoya followed lay along an old Indian war-trail, which had been used by Indians travelling east and west on hunting or war expeditions for countless generations. Overhead, the space was tunnelled through vast depths of sombre foliage—fir, spruce and pine, from which the lower branches had been lopped by the axes of succeeding travellers. Underfoot, the grass and moss grew so thickly in some places that their feet sank deeply as they went ; or, where the fir-needles lay in century-old layers, it was like walking on a carpet elastic with dead years.

Towards evening they reached a marshy tract, at the head of a small lake ; and here a considerable amount of time was lost in trying to find a safe path across without going round. For once Katoya's unerring woodcraft found itself at fault, because, in order to avoid some thickly timbered country to the north, where the trails were overgrown, she had taken a more southerly course than the one she had chosen on her previous journey. The delay disturbed her much more than it would have done on any ordinary occasion, because of a feeling of acute uneasiness which grew greater every hour, and which increased her anxiety to reach the Moosebull country at the earliest possible moment. Notwithstanding her immense capacity for keeping her head in the most trying circumstances, the encounter with Scar-face the night before had shaken even her iron nerve. And when, after having at last crossed the

marsh, she did not find a suitable camping-place till the twilight had already begun to fall, she lay down to a broken rest in which she kept watch half the night. The slightest noise disturbed her in the misty stillness of the marsh. It might be only the snap of a rotten twig which the weight of the mist broke off ; or the plop of a water-drop into a pool ; Katoya's alert hearing caught it just as surely as the delicate tread of a deer's feet in the shallow water among the sedge.

In spite of her uneasiness, the night passed without disturbance, and when the sun rose they were already some distance on their way. Once clear of the mists of the low-lying country, the morning was fresh and sun-sweetened, even under the trees. Lingered flowers of the late summer lifted strangely mottled cups above the grass in the open glades, and the humming-birds glowed like quivering lamps as they hovered over the blossoms. Yet Thunder Boy went with a heavy heart, for Manoo had not arrived. He had been secretly glad of the enforced delay of the marsh, because it increased the chances that Manoo would catch them up : but he wisely kept his satisfaction to himself, as he knew that his grandmother's only anxiety was to push on, and that Manoo's whereabouts did not trouble her.

By the middle of the morning they had reached the broken country lying along the edge of the lower foothills. The early freshness of the morning had given way to a heavy heat, which made travelling in the open very fatiguing. So, as they had now covered the greater part of their journey, and, if nothing occurred to hinder them, would be able to reach its end before nightfall, Katoya decided to halt, and refresh themselves with food and rest before continuing. She was the

more inclined to halt at the point they had reached, since it was sheltered from the sun by rocks on three sides forming a sort of shallow cave, and commanded, moreover, on its open side, a narrow, but deep gorge, with a stream at the bottom, now shrunk to a series of water-holes. Unless some one were to climb up on the opposite side of the gorge, the spot was completely hidden from view by the surrounding rocks. She sent Thunder Boy down to the nearest water-hole to bring back some water in the tin mug, and then sat down in the shadow to await his return. A feeling of great weariness was upon her. A heaviness crept through all her limbs. She lost all desire to move. One by one, her keen faculties seemed to be blurred into semi-consciousness. She gazed listlessly below her to where a solitary fir-tree, which had somehow found foothold in a cleft, had gone down before the last hurricane, and now formed a bridge across the narrow neck of the gorge ; yet although her eyes saw it clearly enough to note the long strands of tree-lichen that hung raggedly from its lower branches, they looked a thousand years beyond it until its storm-whitened limbs were merely shapes round which her visions gathered, broke, and gathered again. Even when, after what seemed a lapse of a century, a figure passed quickly over it, as if fleeing from something in pursuit, and that figure took the form of her grandson, she failed to attach it to anything in the present, and watched it disappear like the shapes that succeeded each other with such bewildering swiftness in the chaos of her trance. Yet behind all her visions there worked blindly in her helpless brain an obscure sense of some unknown danger ; steadily approaching, from which, struggle

as she might, she was powerless to escape. It was very close now ; it had almost reached her ; it came stealthily along, while her spirit loitered on the endless trail of the never-resting Dead.

When Thunder Boy went down into the gorge to get the water for his grandmother in the tin mug, he quenched his own thirst by a long drink at the stream, before filling the mug and taking it back to her. Just as he had finished, he caught sight of an Indian who appeared suddenly from behind a rock about a hundred yards down the gorge.

He knew it was too late to hide, for the man was looking straight at him and must have seen him at once. His first impulse was to give his grandmother warning. As he looked, the man disappeared. Thunder Boy began to climb rapidly. As he went, the water in the mug spilled itself more and more. He dared not go more slowly. Better a thousand times that his grandmother should shrivel up with thirst than fall into the hands of her enemies !

He was half-way up when the Indian appeared again, but much nearer than before, as he worked his way quickly along the upper side of the gorge. He had no sooner come into view than he was followed by a second, and then a third. Thunder Boy did not wait to see if a still larger number followed. His grandmother's safety depended upon the quickest action of which he was capable. There was not the smallest doubt now that he was being pursued. If he continued his present course, he knew that he must certainly lead his pursuers to Katoya's hiding-place, when his warning would be too late, and flight would be useless.

Farther up the gorge, and considerably below the rocks Katoya had chosen, he caught sight of the fallen tree. Instantly he made up his mind. Instead of keeping in an upward direction, he made straight for the tree.

The way was dangerously steep : so steep that only the feet of a mountain sheep could be sure of not missing their footing and falling into the gorge. But with the Indians close behind, and his grandmother's life in the balance, his feet seemed to choose the only safe footholds almost as if they worked with an independent brain. He reached the tree and began to cross it. Here also he had to use the utmost care to keep his balance on the bare and slippery trunk, with the stumps of decayed branches projecting here and there. Below him, at a depth of two hundred feet, the stream in its boulder-strewn bed filled the chasm with a husky roar. But neither roaring stream nor hollow gloom, nor the perilous passage which bridged them both, could abate his courage or retard his steps. To the watching Indians he seemed to cross the tree almost at a run. Not the boldest amongst them, grown men as they were, would have cared to attempt it at half the pace. They watched him till he had disappeared among the bushes on the opposite side, and then held a council as to what they had better do. It was Scar-face (for it was he who led the band) who decided that they should divide their numbers and cross the bottom of the gorge at a considerable distance both above and below the tree. They would then have a good chance of striking the trail of the squaw and the boy if they were now in flight, instead of remaining in hiding. The rest agreeing with this proposal, he himself continued

along the side of the gorge where Thunder Boy had been first seen, at a height well above the level of the fallen tree.

When Thunder Boy had crossed the tree, he immediately plunged into the thick bushes on the other side, and continued to climb upward, keeping as much out of view as possible from anyone on the opposite side, as he did not want the Indians to see that he was alone, in case they should suspect his endeavour to lead them away from the spot where his grandmother was hidden.

After he had travelled for a long distance, and had neither heard nor seen any sign of his pursuers, he began to turn back towards the gorge by making a wide detour. He crossed the gorge again a long way above the fallen tree, and taking that for a landmark, worked his way with extreme caution towards the spot where he had left his grandmother.

When at length he reached the rocks, he saw to his astonishment that she was not there. But various articles which he knew she had brought with her lay scattered about. The sight of these things reassured him. She could not be far away. Probably, he thought, she had gone to try to find out what had become of him and might return at any moment. He looked carefully up and down the gorge, but could not see her. So he sat down to wait patiently for her return.

It was still early in the afternoon, and the sun shone hotly down in every exposed place. The only shelter on this side of the gorge was that given by the cave-like hollow in the rocks where Thunder Boy sat.

After a while he caught a slight sound among the loose stones close to the entrance of the cave ! She was coming at last. . . . *She?* . . . He saw his mistake,

when too late. Suddenly two Indians appeared before him, round the corner of the rocks.

Thunder Boy was very quick. Indeed, there were times when he could move with a swiftness that was almost superhuman. And between the Indians and the entrance to the cave were spaces through which the whole of America beckoned him to escape. But not the most amazing swiftness would avail him now. He made one desperate rush, and was seized in Scar-face's powerful arms.

Even then he fought wildly, using hands, feet, even teeth, in a frantic effort to break loose ; but his frenzied struggles only made Scar-face hold him with a firmer grip until the second Indian had passed a deer-hide thong over his shoulders and had bound him fast.

After that he ceased to struggle, knowing but too well what Indian methods were with unsubdued prisoners, and allowed himself to be dragged out into the open, and led away.

In spite of the roughness of the ground and the difficulty of moving quickly with his arms bound, his captors had no mercy upon him, but compelled him to go at a rapid pace. Scar-face in particular took a malicious pleasure in urging him forward, and whenever he stumbled or fell, owing to his bound condition, would kick him brutally to his feet again, while he called him the most insulting Indian names he could think of.

In this way, as he could see by unmistakable signs, they were rapidly following the trail of another party in front. And when at length they overtook it, he was horrified to discover that his grandmother was among its members, helplessly a prisoner like himself.

CHAPTER XXIII

HOW THUNDER BOY WAS VISITED

WHEN Scar-face had started on his pursuit of the squaw and her grandson, his way along the top of the gorge had led him by chance past the very spot where Katoya sat. When he thus stumbled upon her hiding-place, and saw her sitting as if wrapped in meditation, apparently totally unconscious of his approach, a look of malicious triumph had shone in his treacherous eyes. Now, at last, after years of hatred and baffled energy, his ancient enemy was in his power ! Yet he approached her warily, signing to his companions to be on their guard ; for the second wound on his face still stung ; and the lesson she had taught him as to the use she could make of her hunting-knife was too recent to be forgotten. But when, after a most cautious advance, he was close to her and still she had not stirred, his astonishment was great. Was she asleep ? Was she dead ? Surely not the first, for her eyes were open. Surely not the second, for her flesh, when he suddenly gripped her by the arm, was warm.

Even in the clutch of her deadly enemy, Katoya did not move. Her eyes looked at him, it is true ; but their sense was shut in the vast world of her dreams. She saw his evil face ; felt the pressure of his grip ; realized that she was in some great peril ; yet was as powerless

to resist it as if every limb were bound with thongs. Even when he shook her roughly to bring her back to consciousness, she merely swayed limply to and fro, gazing at him all the while with a wide and troubled stare. In spite of his triumph, Scar-face shrank from the expression of the old squaw's eyes. He felt vaguely that they saw him in the midst of things which he could not see ; and, like all Indians, he had a superstitious dread of what he did not understand. For, after all, she was a powerful medicine-woman, who, captive though she was, might work secret evil though she could not move a limb. In order, however, to make his capture as secure as possible, whatever medicine-power she might exert later, he took the precaution of removing the knife from her belt, and tied her wrists together with a thong. Then he forced her to her feet and dragged her roughly out of the cave.

Slowly Katoya's waking consciousness returned. When she came fully to herself, she found herself being driven painfully through the forest in the midst of her captors with her wrists still bound. In proportion to the return of her senses, the horror of her situation grew upon her. She knew well by now into whose merciless hands she had fallen, for Scar-face had declared his presence by many a brutal word and deed. Yet even now, hopeless though her position seemed, her spirit was undaunted, and she went on with a grim endurance which never flinched under any blow. Her thoughts centred less in herself than in her grandson ; for she was as yet entirely in ignorance of his fate. In spite of her anxiety, the memory of the things she had seen in her trance was not altogether obliterated, and among its broken visions, and fleeting events,

one image kept presenting itself over and over again. It was the figure of Thunder Boy moving quickly over a bridge formed by a fallen tree. That was all. Try as she would, nothing definite shaped in her memory either before or after. Between the vision of the tree, and her slow return to consciousness, there was only a vague drift of unconnected figures that floated in a mist. And when he and his captors caught up her own party she knew nothing of it, as they remained in the rear, and she was kept moving forward too rapidly to allow of listening or looking behind. Even when, footsore and exhausted, she at last arrived at the Snake camp, Scar-face had his own evil reasons for keeping her in ignorance of her grandson's whereabouts.

The arrival of the prisoners caused a great excitement. As soon as it was known the entire camp turned out to see them, though, as Thunder Boy was still kept in the background, it was the squaw who was at first the centre of curiosity. In the presence of this crowd Katoya carried herself with proud dignity. It did not matter that her body was exhausted, that her limbs ached, and that her feet were cut and bruised. It did not matter that she stood defenceless, and without hope of rescue, in the midst of her most deadly enemies. In spite of all she had undergone and of the certainty of merciless cruelty to come, she braced her tired limbs to keep her body erect, held her head like a queen, and swept the crowding mob of hostile faces round her with a look of fearlessness mingled with scorn. And more than one stalwart brave, meeting the direct gaze of those unflinching eyes, remembered uneasily that the captive in their midst was something

more than an aged squaw, and that unless she were killed, and got quickly out of the way, she might gather her mighty medicine-power together, and bring down disaster on their heads.

But she was not long left to confront the public gaze. For as soon as a tepee could be converted into a temporary prison, she was dragged thither, and secured firmly to one of the lodge-poles by a raw-hide lariat.

When Katoya had been imprisoned, so that she could not see what happened, Thunder Boy was brought into camp, where his arrival aroused hardly less interest than hers had done. His history, owing to Scar-face's dealings with his uncle, was well known. The half-white, half-redskin boy, brought up by his grandmother, and rumoured to be under the influence of her medicine, and more familiar with beasts than with human beings, was regarded by the Snakes as a highly valuable prisoner. For though Katoya's medicine-power was known to be definitely hostile to them, his might be turned to their advantage, on account of his extreme youth, when once the death of his grandmother had destroyed her influence over him.

When Thunder Boy gazed into the faces of those crowding round him, as if to read some sign which would give him an inkling of what they were likely to do, he had not the remotest idea that he was already a famous personage through all the Indian lands. All he knew was, that the dark faces about him thrust themselves between him and liberty, and cut him off from the outer world. He looked anxiously on all sides for his grandmother, but could see no sign of her. He concluded, rightly enough, that she was already a close prisoner in one of the tepees.

When he had been subjected to a minute examination, in which even his teeth were inspected, he was dragged into a tepee, and the thong with which he was bound, attached to one of the lodge-poles. All the rest of the day, there was a continual coming and going of people, through the tepee—men, women and children, who came to gratify their curiosity. And it was not until evening that the crowd thinned away and he was left to himself. At nightfall, Scar-face came into the tepee and asked him many questions about his grandmother and her doings. It was evident to the boy that not having been able to extract any information from her, he was determined to see what he could learn from him. Thunder Boy was no fool. He answered all the questions without hesitation, and in such a manner that when Scar-face at length left him, he went away stuffed with information which kept him as much in the dark as to Katoya's real intentions as even she herself would have wished. After that, he was brought some food, and then left to himself as before. He ate the food ravenously, for he had tasted nothing since early morning. Then, tired out with all he had gone through, he lay down. There was no bed to be seen, as the tepee was bare of all furnishings, and looked as if it had not been recently occupied. But, weary though his limbs were, his brain was too much excited by the events of the day to allow him immediately to go to sleep. As dusk fell, he listened to the noises in the camp and wondered whether Scar-face would visit him again. But when, after a long time, the camp noises gradually ceased, and nobody came, he concluded that he would be left alone for the night, and presently fell into a deep slumber.

He was wakened with a start by some one giving him a kick. And then, half dazed with his heavy sleep, saw Scar-face standing over him in the broad daylight. Again Scar-face kicked him brutally and ordered him to get up. Thunder Boy had no choice but to obey, although he hated his captor even more than he dreaded him. With the loose end of the thong, which he had already unfastened, in his hand, Scar-face went out of the tepee, dragging the boy after him. Then he made a leisurely tour of the camp, leading his captive by the thong, as if he had been a dog and inviting every one to have a good look at the "medicine-woman's cub." Slowly, amid the jeers and scoffs of the entire camp, Thunder Boy was forced to undergo this humiliating ordeal, and it was not until Scar-face had forced him to go three times round the circle of tepees, that he took him back, and fastened him to a stake driven into the ground outside the unoccupied tepee. The flap of the doorway was left unfastened so that the boy could go in and out as he liked ; but he was so mortified and furious at the treatment he had just received that he preferred to remain in the stuffy interior under the heat of the sun rather than subject himself to a further exhibition under the staring eyes of the camp.

The day passed without any marked event beyond a second visit of Scar-face, who jerked him brutally out by the thong and forced him to undergo a fresh inspection in the open space in front of the tepee, when he amused himself by playing the part of a successful showman with a new animal on leash. And it was not till his tormentor had at last grown tired of this game and had taken himself off elsewhere, that Thunder

Boy was able once more to creep back into shelter and hide his misery and helpless rage.

The day passed slowly away. All this time Thunder Boy had seen no signs of his grandmother, and did not know in which of the tepees she was a prisoner. When night fell Scar-face returned, and having told him that if he attempted to escape, or made himself at all troublesome, no mercy would be shown to him, he fastened the skin flap securely on the outside and left him for the night. Thunder Boy lay awake for a long time, listening to the camp noises as before. When the moon rose, he watched how the light fell through the covering of the tepee, showing the dark places where the forms of forest beasts were painted round the middle. And, trying to make out what their obscure outlines represented, he fell asleep. Close upon midnight he awoke, as if some noise had disturbed him close to his head. He could not tell whether it was inside or outside the tepee. He lay and listened with his heart beating loudly. The noise came again.

There was no mistaking it this time. It was the distinct sound of an animal drawing the air into its nostrils, and expelling it with force to get a fresher smell at the next sniff. At first he thought it might be one of the huskies, who occasionally wandered round the tepees at night, in the hope of picking up scraps thrown away from the evening meal. But after a sniff or two, such a night-prowler would generally conclude there was nothing worth sniffing for, and would continue his prowl elsewhere. But whatever animal was outside the tepee now, it was evidently not so easily satisfied. Thunder Boy heard the sharp sniff go all round the tepee with now and then a sound as if the animal were

trying to push its nose under the edge of the skin covering. Thunder Boy could not make up his mind what sort of creature it could be—fox, badger, lucivee or bear. Hardly a fox, he thought; the fox tribe usually kept well away from the neighbourhood of huskies. A badger, also, seldom ventured into camp, for the same reason. A wolf, though it might possibly slink in, driven by famine in the hunger-moon, was not likely to be a summer visitor when food was plentiful and the deer were fat. There remained only the lucivee and the bear. The lucivee was a born thief, and a robber by profession. Also it carried that sort of hooked outfit under the fur of its terrible feet which gave even a husky matter for consideration, before he attacked their savage possessor. More than all other creatures of the wilderness, Thunder Boy had an instinctive distrust of these gigantic cats. Lying there in the great tepee which seemed larger than ever in the dusk of the moon, he felt more lonely and helpless than he had ever felt before; and as the moonlight fell dimly through the strange shadow ring of the hunting beasts painted on its sides, a new thought came to disturb him. Suppose this were a Beast-medicine tepee, and that the dark stains representing animals through which the moonlight fell, were medicine-pictures whose power could draw to them the creatures of which they were the signs? He had heard of such things. The attracting power of the right picture, painted in the right way, was very strong. It was agreed by all the wisest medicine-men that on certain nights, in certain states of the moon, when the Beast-tepee became active, the images painted on its sides could draw their living representatives to them from uncounted leagues. And

suppose this was one of those nights? Suppose the tepee had put forth its drawing power? As the thought took hold upon him, he could almost hear the feet of the lucivees creeping out of their lairs!

But closer than the imagined tread of lynxes was a loud scratching which now began at the bottom of the tepee as if the animal were trying to find a way in. In spite of his determination not to be afraid, Thunder Boy felt his heart thumping. The scratching stopped. For a few seconds there was complete silence, and he comforted himself with the hope that the creature, whatever it was, had gone away. But when the sound began again at the back of the tepee and continued without stopping, there was no room for any more doubt. The animal was determined to get in. Suppose it were a grizzly! In that case, he knew, his sufferings would be sharp and short. The resistance of the tepee to his efforts would make him furious, and once he had entered, he would show small mercy to anything he might happen to find inside. The thought terrified him at first, but when he began to consider, he did not think a grizzly would take the trouble to go about his work so quietly. A thwarted grizzly invariably battered and tore to shreds whatever inanimate object offered him resistance. But the animal now scratching outside the tepee was far too patient in its perseverance to turn out to be a bear.

The thong with which Thunder Boy was bound was sufficiently long to allow of his reaching the back of the tepee, but so fastened that he could not move farther than the entrance, the flap of which was securely laced on the outside. He wondered what he should do if the animal managed to make its way in. The scratching

continued. Then there was a straining of the covering-skins, and it was plain that the creature had got its nose under the edge of the tepee and was beginning to lift. Thunder Boy drew away as far as he could to the other side and waited. The straining and heaving grew louder. The lodge-poles creaked, as the covering tightened in the strain and the whole tepee seemed to sway. Then there was a bursting, rending noise, and he was conscious that a large body had forced its way into the lodge.

He rose to his feet, while every hair on his body seemed alive with fear. In the uncertain glimmer he saw, or fancied he saw, a dark shape, crouching as if to spring. It moved: it was coming! Thunder Boy convulsively gripped his thong with both hands, so as to be ready to convert the slack of it into a noose in an attempt to strangle the creature when it made its attack. He had little faith in the plan, but it was the only thing he could do. And now the tepee became full of a sound that broke suddenly with a husky rattle that seemed to shake the air.

Surely he knew *that* sound! . . . Could it be? Was it possible? . . . The question was answered by a furry sensation at his legs as the big panther rubbed itself against him and nearly knocked him down. Manoo at last! But how had Manoo found out?

CHAPTER XXIV

MANOO USES HIS TEETH

ASK the hunting wolf how, after half a day's solitary ranging over a wide extent, he knows where he will find the pack at night. Ask the water-finder why the willow-wand turns in his hand to the hidden source far below the soil. Ask what you will ; but do not expect an explanation of that marvellous instinct which, when its eyes are no use to it, when scent does not lie, and sound does not carry, guides a wild creature on its way through trackless wildernesses, straight to its home or kin. But this much can be told, for this is what really happened. When Manoo, returning from his long hunting, found the camp deserted, and its owners gone, he did not waste his time by sitting down to think. Instinct told him that they would not return. Instinct told him the direction they had taken. The trail was too old for scent to lie, but here and there he got a faint suggestion that human feet had passed. He moved swiftly along, as if something warned him that there was no time to lose. He reached the gorge, where the capture had been made and even came to the rocks where Katoya had sat. But the rocky surfaces parched by the heat had long been cleansed of human taint, and offered nothing to his questing nose.

In spite of that, he lingered some time about the spot,

not able to satisfy himself, and stirred more and more by a vague uneasiness, the longer he stayed. He sat down at last in the very spot where Katoya had been seized, and kept his savage eyes roving up and down the gorge below him, as if on the watch for something which might at any moment arrive. He saw a doe lead her fawn down to drink at the stream ; look nervously about, as if she felt but could not see the coldly gleaming eyes that glared fiercely down upon her ; stamp her foot again and again to challenge the unseen danger to declare itself ; and then, though nothing outward warned her, seek cover again in the deep wood. He saw a hare come in long, light bounds to the same drinking-place as the deer. He saw a marten stalk the hare from rock to bush, and from bush to stream. Yet all these things, which, at another time, would have filled him with the fiercest interest, were now merely passing shows which left him indifferent. Only once, when he caught a glimpse of one of his distant, but detested cousins, the lynxes, did he show any sign of animation. And then it was nothing more than a wave or two of his tail, and a muffled rumble in his throat which signified : " Keep off."

All this time he had been busily using eyes, ears and nose to try to get the information he wanted. Just before sunset, another sense came into play. It was a sense which had no name. It borrowed its activity from none of the others, nor had any dependence on them. All you could say of it—all even Manoo himself could have said—if he could have explained it to himself—was : *it knew*.

Never doubting for a moment, never pausing on his way to peer and probe, and sniff uncertain smells, Manoo suddenly set off in a north-easterly direction, as

certainly and swiftly as if he followed a new-made trail.

When he reached the outskirts of the Snake encampment, he was in so little doubt that he had come to the right place, that he only waited long enough to be sure that all was still, before stealing into the camp. Then he crept from tepee to tepee, a long, gaunt shadow in the clear light of the moon. Why he should have picked out the one in which Thunder Boy lay, was part of the same mysterious faculty which had brought him where he was : after that, his nose did the rest.

And now that he was actually inside, and had found his Indian mate safe and sound, his joy knew no bounds. He would have started one of his gambols then and there, if Thunder Boy had not kept him in check and made him realize that something serious must be done. Manoo soon grasped the situation. His mate was a prisoner. He could not leave the tepee and come out into the open night, even when Manoo invited him in his plainest manner to do so. Manoo profoundly distrusted the tepee. It had too Indian a smell and vividly brought back the past. True, the smell was largely that of Thunder Boy himself and therefore very good. But it mixed itself with much that was not Thunder Boy, and for which the panther had no relish. Also it did not take him very long to discover the exact reason why his mate could not leave the tepee. The deer-skin thong which kept him a prisoner, awoke too many bitter memories, not to be recognized. Manoo was equally aware that there was only one way to deal with a thong ; and the only difference the present one had, compared with the old one of evil recollection, was that it was slightly thicker. But what is thickness of mere thong when a pair of powerful jaws assail it

with fierce determination? Besides, if the thong was thicker, the panther's teeth were better fitted for their task. So, crouching on the ground, in order to give his muscles full play, and planting his forepaws firmly on the thong, he set to work to make his way through.

Patience, and the moon, get through the longest night. Patience, and a panther's teeth, chew through the stoutest thong. The moon had not lengthened the shadow of the tepee more than a few inches before Manoo's task was accomplished and Thunder Boy was free.

When he crawled out of the tepee through the opening Manoo had made, his one thought was to force a way into his grandmother's and set her free likewise. He did not know which it was, as she had not been allowed outside her tepee, since her imprisonment; but he had an idea whereabouts it lay, as he had watched her arrival from the place where his captors had halted, and had seen which way she had been led. Therefore, it was to the cunning of Manoo's nose that he chiefly trusted.

From tepee to tepee, he crept as noiselessly as the panther himself. There was no need to tell Manoo the object of their stealthy search, where peril lurked at every turn, and you could not tell what sharp eyes might be on watch in the dusky tepees. As he glided across each moonlit space, his thin-flanked body seemed scarcely more substantial than the shadows out of which he came. And at each tepee, his quivering nostrils filled themselves full of the scents he detested, searching always for the one which would tell him that he had reached his goal.

At last he stopped before a tepee pitched slightly apart from the others, and, by his sniffing and excited

stiffening of his body, made it quite plain to Thunder Boy that the object of their search was here.

With fingers trembling with excitement, Thunder Boy unlaced the calf-skin flap which closed the entrance. He could not tell whether his grandmother was kept in solitary confinement, or whether she was guarded by some one sleeping in the tepee at night. The risk he ran, if she were so guarded, was tremendous. Nevertheless, there was nothing to do but take it, whatever might be the result.

While he was so engaged, he listened in a terrified suspense. Not a sound. Both within the tepee and throughout the camp, a silence, as of death. Softly, very softly, he drew back the flap, and peered in, dreading what he might see.

There, sitting bolt upright in the centre, sat his grandmother—alone !

Her amazement at seeing her grandson and Manoo was extreme. But there was no time to be lost in explanations on either side. The thing of life-and-death importance was to set her free. Unlike Thunder Boy, she was not merely fastened by a thong, but her ankles and wrists were bound so tightly that it was only possible for her to crawl painfully on hands and knees. The cruelty of this barbarous treatment was entirely due to Scar-face, who neglected no means to show her that she was completely in his power. Thunder Boy's blood boiled with indignation when he discovered how tightly she was bound. As neither he nor Katoya had their knives, there was nothing with which he could cut her bonds, and so he had to do what he could to loosen them with his hands.

He pulled and twisted with all his might, yet still

the thongs held, and the knots would not give way. It seemed a terribly long time before at last he managed to get the wrists unbound. Then he set to work upon the ankles. These seemed to be tied even more tightly if possible than the wrists. All the time, he kept listening anxiously for any sound of movement in the neighbouring tepees.

Suddenly Manoo, who, while the work was going on, had mounted guard at the entrance of the tepee, gave a low growl. Thunder Boy listened, his heart beating with terror, but could hear nothing. He went on with feverish anxiety; but his fingers, sore and aching with the toughness of the thongs, seemed to be all thumbs. At last, however, the knots began to show signs of giving way. If he could only be sure of being able to work undisturbed for a few minutes more, he began to hope for success.

Again Manoo growled, this time more loudly. There was a slight sound as if some one were moving in one of the near tepees. Thunder Boy looked up. Manoo's body, black against the moonlight, was rigid with expectancy. Thunder Boy crept to the entrance. As he did so, he saw a figure come out from a tepee not far away and stand watching. A husky dog barked. The figure moved. Thunder Boy darted back to his grandmother's side and dragged desperately at the thongs.

Was it the stealthy tread of moccasins advancing or the merest whisper of the night-wind over the grass? Manoo's growl took a new note, and ended in a snarl.

"They come!" Katoya said. "It is too late. Quick! Quick! They must not catch us *both*!"

Thunder Boy knew that to argue or delay for even a fraction of a second was to be lost. He knew also that

any future chance of rescuing his grandmother would be gone unless he was able to make good his escape.

The Indian, who by this time had advanced close to the tepee, saw an astonishing sight. Just as he had reached the entrance, a boy's figure seemed to leap from the very ground beneath his feet. He darted upon him, and had almost seized him when something sprang upon him from behind and bore him to the ground. He had barely time to realize that he was struggling with a large panther, when that, too, leaped away, and after being severely mauled, he picked himself up to see the animal follow the boy, and then both of them plunge headlong into the woods.

He then ran into the tepee, found Katoya sitting calmly as if nothing had happened, and rushed out again to give the alarm. Immediately, the entire camp seemed to wake. The men came running out of the tepees, armed with weapons which they had hastily snatched up, followed by the terrified squaws who feared that the camp was about to be attacked. The huskies, roused by the disturbance, began to bark and quarrel as usual; and, when they discovered the trail of the panther, set up a ferocious chorus of yells and followed it like a pack of wolves.

And then the chase began in earnest. Following the yelling pack, the Indians plunged into the woods. It was bad running among the trees, for, although the moon was bright, the shadows were misleading, and in the thickest places there was no light at all.

Meanwhile Thunder Boy and Manoo had made the most of their start. The clamour in the camp behind them came fitfully as the huskies ran this way and that; then swelled into a desperate roar as the pack

found the forest trail. In spite of the darkness and the impossibility of seeing any track, they fled on swiftly. Manoo led the way at first, but as the huskies drew closer, he drifted into the rear. Nearer and nearer came the pack, in full cry, filling the moonlit hollows with its hideous uproar. The huskies were the great danger, for hard upon their heels came their Indian masters, who, without their lead, must sooner or later have given up the pursuit as hopeless until dawn.

There was no time to choose any special direction. The only thing to be done was to keep ahead at any cost. Thunder Boy ran on blindly, avoiding obstacles more by feeling than by sight, and keeping his footing as if by a miracle. The huskies were very close now. Another moment or two and the pack would be upon them, and his fate decided. His courage began to sink. With the pack raging about him and the Indians closing round, he knew there could be no possibility of escape ; for once more in the power of his captors, neither he nor his grandmother could expect the smallest mercy at their hands. And between him and this terrible doom there was nothing but one single barrier—Manoo.

The panther hung well back. His one idea was to hold the pack long enough in check, to give his mate time to escape. If the approaching fight was to be his last, he was determined to sell his life as dearly as possible, so that his end was gained.

The huskies swept on, confident of an easy victory. A panther was the hereditary enemy of the husky and wolf kin. Not a husky among them all would have dared to face one alone ; but now that they felt sure

of destroying their hated foe in company, they yelled each other into courage, like many another mob.

And still in front of them, the long, thin-flanked shape swung through the moonlit dusk, or was lost in deeper shadow ; itself a hunted shadow, that fled along the shades.

They are on it now, exultant and furious, the saliva dripping from their jowls, the death-cry in their throats !

Softly as a drift of thistledown, caught by an eddy in the wind, the shadow turned swiftly upon itself and stood at bay.

And then began a battle, the like of which in deadly concentration the forest had seldom seen. The sounds of it carried far to hidden coverts where the deer crouched in terror, and made the heights across the valley resound, as the rocks tossed back yelping echoes, crag by crag ; and grew in piercing intensity, till it seemed to invade the very heavens, as if a star pack were yapping at the silver heels of the moon.

The first huskies which came in contact with the panther's terrible fangs met their fate immediately, and were tossed aside to die. If a series of single combats could have settled it, Manoo would have come off easily the victor ; but in the storm of wolfish bodies that broke over him like a tidal wave he was overwhelmed by sheer weight of numbers. A less courageous animal would have known itself beaten, and have striven for nothing else than to extricate itself from under the snarling mass, and escape before the very breath was crushed out of its body. But Manoo had the courage of twenty huskies, and the breath-power

of any six. Besides, his blood was up now, and not all the huskies in all the camps of the West could conquer him into submission now that his fighting spirit was fairly roused. And he was not hampered by any inherited ancestral affection which urged him to respect his assailants' throats. For whatever gentleness of heart the Great Spirit had put into him for the human, it had made the balance even by leaving it out for the dog. Dogs, wolves, coyotes—he hated them all with a perfect hatred ; and to be baited by a pack of mere huskies woke all his worst passions and drove him almost mad.

It was so dark under the trees that neither the attacking party nor the attacked could see the other. The pack snatched, bit, and worried everything it believed to be a portion of Manoo. But as the portions of the panther were limited to his own single body, and as that body, even when it struggled to the crest of the wave, was continually submerged under a heavy sea, it could only be bitten at favourable moments by those near enough to bite. And so it came to pass that many a bite intended for the panther, reached another mark, and that more than one husky found itself engaged in a fierce struggle with one of its own mates.

Very soon, the Indians, led by the tumult, reached the spot. But the place was so overshadowed by the trees that they could see nothing but a vague mass which rose and fell like a heavy ground-swell, as the panther alternately fought his way to the surface or sank again to the depths.

But whether he rose or sank, his powerful jaws never ceased to work, as many a shrieking husky discovered to its cost.

CHAPTER XXV

THUNDER BOY GOES TO FIND HIS WHITE FATHER

FAR in the distance, Thunder Boy heard the clamour and guessed what was happening. But as he knew that he could not be of the least service to the panther by turning back, and that it was probably in order to give him time to escape, that Manoo had allowed the pack to surround him, he continued his flight. By degrees the noise grew fainter as he plunged deeper and deeper into the forest. Soon it died away altogether ; and when at last he stopped to listen, he could hear nothing but the beating of his own heart in the unbroken stillness of the night.

Up to the present, his only object had been to put as much distance as possible between him and his pursuers, but now that he had time to reflect, he began to consider what direction he ought to take. He knew that it would not be long before dawn would break. And with dawn, he knew also that the Indians, baffled hitherto by the darkness, would immediately take up the trail : moreover, that, once they had discovered it, they would follow it up hour after hour—day after day, if necessary—as tirelessly as wolves. So that unless he could think out some plan by which to elude them altogether, sooner or later he must fall into their hands, and all hope of rescuing his grandmother would be for ever destroyed.

To do this, he felt that, at all costs, he must reach the camp of the Moosebull Indians with whom she had told him his pale-face father was a prisoner. If his father were indeed the mighty medicine-man which the Moosebulls believed him to be, then surely he and they combined would devise some means by which Katoya might be saved before it was too late.

Hitherto, he had been travelling haphazard in an easterly direction, but when the first streaks of the dawn began to brighten he altered his course and struck south-west. From what his grandmother had told him, he had a fairly good idea as to the position of the Moosebull camp, and he thought that if he kept on in his present course and met with no serious obstacles, he would be able to reach its neighbourhood that night, even if he did not actually strike the camp itself till the following day. But the long distance he had already travelled to the east, made the journey considerably longer than he had calculated, so that at noon he found he was not far to the north of his own camp, with the greater part of the journey still in front of him. He had stopped to try to locate the exact position of the lake, when he caught sight of an Indian moving quickly through the trees. It was hidden the next moment, but he had seen enough. They were coming then! They had tracked him down!

He started to run quickly in the direction of the lake. He knew that it would be madness to attempt to carry out his first idea of making straight for the Moosebull camp. His pursuers were too close to him for that, and would probably overtake him before he had covered half the distance.

Ah! What was that? Surely not another Snake:

on the right, much closer than the first? It was nothing but the shaking of the leaves on the lower branches of a young maple tree, such as might have been caused by a startled deer, but it was enough. Thunder Boy instantly altered his course. And now he heard a rustling sound of some one bounding through the bushes, on his left. If what he dreaded were correct, it was yet a third Indian ; and if so, his pursuers were nearer than he thought, and putting forth all their efforts to cut him off before he could reach the lake.

He was running now with all his might, keeping as straight a course as he could, for he dared not swerve to either side. The landmarks were familiar now. He knew that he must be close upon the marsh. His heart sank. With the marsh in front, and his pursuers closing in upon him, his chances of escape were small indeed.

And now they burst into sight—behind, to right, to left—five of them at once, and yelled their savage war-cry of triumph—with their enemy all but within their grasp. No possibility of turning back now, or of escape at either side. And in front, to stop all further progress, with its treacherous surface, and black pools of bottomless slime—the marsh !

The Marsh ! . . . Memory, with a footing fleetier than the feet of all this fearful chase, fled back across the past, and flashed one last hope into his brain. . . . The sphagnum path across it !—the pathway of the deer !

It was close now, if he could find it. Surely, on the top of that very slope had stood the startled doe which had first shown him the path.

Yes, there it was ! The dull thread through the glowing crimson carpet of the moss ! the cunning bridge of fibre woven by the centuries across the ancient slime !

He darted down the slope and out upon the marsh. The astonished Indians stood rooted to the ground, expecting every moment to see him sink into the morass, as he sped along its quaking surface. Yet where one can go, another can follow. And to Indian eyes the faintest trail is as a beaten highway. The thin, brown line through the crimson was mark enough for them, and one of the five braves—the boldest—dashed out along it in pursuit. The other four separated in order to follow the edges of the marsh in opposite directions.

Thunder Boy, glancing behind, saw to his terror that one of his pursuers had risked the passage and was already half-way across. Again Memory befriended him and flashed a message from the past. The double track !—the safe, and the treacherous ; the old and the new ! He must not miss the point where the path forked ! His life, indeed, hung upon a thread—a fibre of sphagnum moss ! He kept his eyes anxiously ahead.

Ah, here it was—at his very foot ! He had almost overshot it. He pulled himself up short, as if hesitating which way to go, in order to let his pursuer come up. The Indian came on at a swift run. To the left now, down the old track ! Only a few paces separated the runners. The Indian quickened his pace—was gaining. It seemed as if he would make his capture in the very middle of the marsh. And now the path sways, and now, with the double weight

upon it, gives ominously, while the black water oozes up between the roots of the moss. In spite of that, Thunder Boy runs on. And now, right in front of him, there stretches a suspicious-looking pool, into which the trail dips, though it reappears faintly on the other side. His pursuer is so close behind him now that he can hear the panting of his breath as he comes. And then Thunder Boy does the miraculous thing which he had done once before. As his moccasin touches the edge of the dark water, he gives a sudden bound, seems to snatch his body out of its headlong course even in mid-air, and lands in safety where the fibres hold. Another leap, and he is in the newer trail, skimming its surface like a bird.

What happened after that he did not wait to see. He heard a plunge, a loud splashing, and then a smothered cry. He reached the bank in safety, plunged into the woods, and dashing into a trail he knew, made straight for the lake. He knew now that there was one last chance for him, and that was the canoe. If he could reach the camp in time to launch it before his enemies came up, there was still a possibility that he might baffle them after all. As he ran, he kept listening intently for any sounds of pursuit. By crossing the swamp, he knew that he had gained ground, for his pursuers would be forced to make a detour in order to reach the lake, and, unless they knew of any trail by which they could head him off, he had every chance of gaining the camp in time. But he had reckoned without Scar-face, who, leading the pursuit, had not haunted the locality for nothing on his previous visits. And it was Scar-face himself, who, as Thunder Boy dashed into the deserted camp, appeared almost

at the same moment at the opposite side of the stream and cleared it at a bound.

And now it was a race for the canoe. When Scar-face saw the boy dart among the alders, he divined his purpose and rushed on furiously to thwart it. But Thunder Boy knew the alders, and in spite of much careful watching of the locality, Scar-face did *not*! So while the Indian was thrashing the alder stems like an enraged bullmoose, Thunder Boy was quietly thrusting the canoe along a hidden waterway, and, when Scar-face at last spied him through the leaves, was already well out upon the lake.

To say Scar-face was annoyed is to put it mildly. That the boy should have escaped once, after having been captured, was bad enough, but that, when he was again almost within his grasp, he should slip through his fingers a second time, goaded his anger to a pitch of fury.

Thunder Boy paddled on with all his might, for his quick brain had already formed a plan. He was sufficiently familiar with the other end of the lake to know that it had an outlet there, which connected it with a still further lake, itself probably merely one link in a long chain, of which their own was another. He thought that, by gaining these further lakes, he could run the canoe ashore at some hidden spot, and approach the Moosebull camp through the forest in a northerly direction. With this plan before him, he continued to paddle swiftly, until he reached a point from which the end of the lake was plainly visible. During all this time, he had neither seen nor heard any sign of his pursuers, and he hoped that either they had given up the chase for the present, or were lingering round

the neighbourhood of the camp, in case he should return to it after he thought they had gone. For all that, he kept up a steady pace, too much an Indian to trust what he could not see, and determined to make his escape doubly sure. It was well that he did so, for, looking towards the distant shore to the right, he suddenly saw a party of Indians dash across an open space and disappear among the trees.

In an instant, Thunder Boy realized his danger. If his pursuers could reach the end of the lake before he did, they would try to cut off his escape in that direction. All depended now upon whether he or they would reach the outlet first. He had been paddling quickly hitherto, but now he redoubled his efforts, making the canoe bound through the water, as it gurgled past her sides with each plunge of the paddle. For half a mile before the outlet there was a stretch of stony shore. He had got abreast of it, and was more than half-way along it, when he saw an Indian spring down and come running swiftly over the stones. He was followed, with only a short interval, by three others.

Concealment was out of the question. There was but one thing to be done, and that was to gain the outlet without an instant's loss of time. To go faster than he was going at present seemed impossible. Yet go faster he did, with a sudden spurt of strength which amazed his pursuers and would have surprised himself if he had had any time to think about it. He had many times paddled fast in his life before. He had paddled with all his strength when he and Katoya had escaped from Kennedy and his men. Yet his present paddling surpassed even that effort, urged as then by the

knowledge that her safety was bound up with his own and that unless he made good his escape, her doom was sealed.

He was stronger now and his muscle harder. The wilderness life with Katoya and Manoo had developed him beyond his years. It was as if, under their united influence, the wild sap of the wilderness had entered into him, and now, at this supreme moment, had risen with a rush.

He was very near the outlet. But so were his pursuers; so near that, after each plunge of his paddle, he could catch the crunch of the pebbles beneath their flying feet. The race grew fiercer. It was a struggle for the last few seconds, the last few yards, and the seconds would decide.

As the Indians saw their prey at the point of eluding them for the second time, they let loose a blood-curdling yell. It was a sound to strike mortal terror into any heart. But Thunder Boy was not easily terrorized. The cry struck, but did not paralyse him. It was only a more carrying note than the rattle of the pebbles and the rush of the ripples. It stung his nerves to a last supreme effort. And just as the panting Indians reached the goal they saw to their amazement the canoe shoot forward under his hands, as if some supernatural force had taken possession of his body.

They might easily have shot him, but Scar-face's orders were to capture him alive at all costs. His bargain with Kennedy had been that he should bring back his nephew to him after he had killed Katoya; and even if he broke that evil pact, his promise to the Snakes depended upon the medicine of Thunder Boy very much alive, rather than the body of Thunder

Boy very much dead. But to see him escaping from them for the third time was almost too much for their patience ; and they were just about to try if they could stop his flight by wounding him, when they saw Scar-face himself rush to the top of a rock at the entrance to the river, and fling himself headlong into the water.

His action had been so sudden, and his pace under the influence of his anger so tremendous, that, at the moment when he dived, he was actually several yards ahead of the canoe.

Thunder Boy, taken utterly by surprise, realized his danger when too late to avoid it. Scar-face was a strong swimmer, and before the boy could alter the canoe's course the Indian had risen to the surface and was alongside. As the savage head rose, shaking the water from its eyes, Thunder Boy saw that it held a knife, clenched between its teeth.

He was in the full current now. It would carry him swiftly onward even if he did not paddle. But Scar-face was too powerful a swimmer, and was, besides, too close to the canoe to risk a race. There was only one thing to be done, and that quickly ; for he knew that in the next moment his fate would be decided. Now, or never !

Scar-face's hand was already on the edge of the canoe. Either he intended to upset it, or to rip it with the knife still held between his teeth. Thunder Boy did not wait to see which he intended to do. Lifting his paddle high in the air, he brought it down with all his force upon the Indian's head. Scar-face ducked to avoid it ; but he was the fraction of a second too late. The paddle descended edgewise, like a mighty wooden knife, and caught him full on the left side of his head.

Blinded and half stunned by the blow, he lost his hold on the canoe. Thunder Boy heard him groan, saw the water swirl in eddies about his struggling form ; and, waiting for nothing more, plunged his paddle once more into the current and swept rapidly out of reach.

He heard the wild Indian cries behind and then a flight of bullets whizzed close by him. One struck the canoe above water-line, and the others fell harmlessly into the river. But he was in the centre of the current, and his vigorous paddling carried him immediately out of range of further firing.

He found, as he expected, that the river flowed, after some considerable distance, into another lake.

Once well out on this second lake, he paddled on for a fairly long time before he thought it was safe to land, in case his enemies were following the course of the river in order to reach the northern shore. He was now sufficiently far to the west to think that if he took a northerly course he ought to be able to reach the neighbourhood of the Moosebull camp before his pursuers could catch him up, if they had already reached the woods at the head of the lake. He did not think they would dare to follow him as far, even if they struck his trail, as they would be then well within the hunting grounds of the Moosebolls, who were their deadly foes.

He ran the canoe aground at a spot where it would be well hidden from prying eyes, and then struck into the woods. In spite of his exhausted condition, he pushed on till evening, and then, choosing a hollow screened by thick underwood, he lay down to sleep. He was so worn out with all his efforts, and slept so

heavily that he did not wake till it was broad day in the open spaces, and till even into the deepest thickets the morning light had penetrated. When he realized how far the morning was advanced, he was very much upset by the loss of so much precious time, not to speak of the risk he ran of being captured, if his enemies had fallen upon his trail. However, having learnt, like the animals, the secret of relaxing mind and body in the profoundest sleep, he found that what he had lost in time, he had gained in energy. And when, just as he started, the little sparrow which the Indians called Killoolet, or Little Sweet Voice, shot a shaft of slender song into the sunlight from the bough of a sassafras tree far up above his head, he took it for a good omen, and, filled with new spirit, went swiftly on his way.

It was noon before he saw anything which gave him a clue to the whereabouts of the object of his search. Then he came upon a trail trending in a north-westerly direction. It was one which had evidently been lately used a good deal ; and as he followed it, he presently came upon many unmistakable signs that he was in the neighbourhood of some large camp. He went more slowly now, in order to observe any Indians who might be on the move, before he himself was seen. For supposing that he had made a mistake, and had hit upon the wrong camp, he might find himself again a prisoner, and be as far off from rescuing his grandmother as ever.

It was not long before his caution was rewarded by seeing a hunting party returning to camp ; and he had just time to hide himself among the underwood before they passed close by. He then saw, to his great relief,

that they belonged to the same tribe as those whom he had first seen in company with the white man, and must, therefore, as his grandmother had told him, be members of the great Moosebull tribe, one of the largest and most powerful in the West. He waited till they had gone by, and then followed them till they reached the camp.

CHAPTER XXVI

HOW HE PROVED HIS THUNDER

WHEN he came in sight of the tepees, and saw the great size of the Moosebull camp, his heart sank at the prospect of having to meet all these strangers, and tell them his story, which might not move them after all. Even the thought of his pale-face father did not greatly comfort him, now that the time was come actually to meet him face to face alone. Hitherto, his experience of the pale-faces had not been a happy one, and the idea of a father who was one of them was almost as vague as that of the Thunder Bird, who might, without any warning, deafen you with his wings. Yet whatever he felt, the thing had to be done, and that without delay, if his mission were to be accomplished and his grandmother saved. So, summoning up his courage, he came out into the open, and entered the camp with a beating heart.

An Indian, who happened to be standing by one of the outermost tepees, came up to him and asked him what he wanted.

"I want," Thunder Boy said boldly, "to speak with the pale-face."

The man looked at him in surprise.

"You wish to speak with 'White Medicine'?" he asked.

"I do not know what he is called," the boy answered.

"But I wish to speak with the White Man who smiles with his eyes."

"How do you know where he smiles?" the Indian asked.

Without intending to do so, he had by both questions admitted the presence of such a person in the camp.

Thunder Boy caught at this admission with intense relief.

"I have seen him in the forest," he said simply, as he pointed back among the trees.

By this time, Thunder Boy's arrival had been observed by several more Indians, who now came up, and he soon found himself surrounded by a group all very curious to know who he was, and what had brought him there. But to all questions, he would answer nothing except that he must speak with "the pale-face who smiled with his eyes."

Finding that he obstinately refused to give any more information, the Indian who had first spoken to him offered to do as he asked. So, accompanied by the whole group, the boy was led into the centre of the camp, where his guide stopped before one of the principal tepees.

Directly Thunder Boy saw the tall man who was standing in the entrance of it, his heart leaped with joy, as he realized that his search was ended. Yet now that he was actually face to face with his unknown White Father, he felt his heart beginning to sink. And when he looked into his eyes, his courage did not come to him again, because they looked as grave as an Indian's, and he could not find the smile.

Yet speak he must, whatever it cost him. There was no time to lose. Without any preparation, and in

his intense nervousness not knowing how he ought to begin, he simply blurted out :

“ I have come to find you, because you are my pale-face father.”

The man stared at him in astonishment ; then, in the Indian language, asked him what he meant.

Then Thunder Boy's power of speech came to him again, and he spoke rapidly, trying his best to explain, and always ending every statement with the words : “ I am Thunder Boy ; your son.”

“ But how do I know that you are my son ? ” the White Man asked, giving the boy a searching look.

“ Because I tell you that I am,” Thunder Boy answered simply.

“ But how do *you* know that you are ? ”

Thunder Boy was so taken aback by the question that, for a moment, he did not speak. If this terrible pale-face demanded proof of his being his own son, what proof had he to offer beyond the fact that his grandmother had told him so ?

“ Katoya, my grandmother, has said it,” he said gravely.

“ Katoya, your grandmother, may have said many things,” his father replied ; “ but as I do not know Katoya, how am I to tell ? ”

That there should be anyone, white man or red, who did not know Katoya—Katoya, the great medicine-woman whose fame was as wide as the West itself—struck Thunder Boy as such an unheard-of thing, that he was utterly bewildered by the novelty of the idea.

“ I have been told that my son died very long ago when my wife died also,” his father went on. “ It

happened not long after I was taken prisoner by the Moosebills."

Thunder Boy looked at his father for a moment or two without speaking.

"My mother died—yes," he said, speaking very slowly. "But *I* did not die. You must believe that I am alive, because . . . because . . . because you *see* I am not dead!" he added in triumph.

And then the smile, which seemed also to have died, came again to the eyes of the pale-face, as Thunder Boy had first seen him, and, slipping from their lids, slid down the deep furrows of his cheeks and got tangled with his teeth.

And then Thunder Boy smiled too, so that the two smiles seemed the expression of one and the same face before it got divided by the moons.

"I see that *you* are very much alive," the pale-face said as he tried to stop smiling. "But that does not make my son alive. They told me he died as a little child many moons ago."

The smile went out of his whole face, and his eyes looked very grave.

"Who told you?" Thunder Boy asked.

He had a way of asking questions in a sudden, quick voice which impressed people and made them stop to think before they answered. The pale-face paused now.

"Why do you wish to know? Is it not enough that I received the message?"

"No," Thunder Boy said, with the same abrupt quickness. "It is not enough."

This time the man looked at him with a surprise which he could not conceal, and then said: "The message

was brought to me by an Indian who followed a hunting trail from the east."

"There are messages which are not true words," the boy continued rapidly. "Did he tell you where he got his message? Did he tell you his tribe?"

As one searching question followed another, the pale-face gazed at the boy with growing astonishment. He found himself answering them as if his questioner were a grown man instead of a youth little more than a child.

"I did not ask him his tribe. But his message was given to him by my brother who lives with the pale-faces very far to the east."

As he said the last words, he gave the impression that places and persons so far east in geography lay even farther east in his thought, as if they were little more than shadows cast by a mind already setting far down in the West.

"What was he like?"

Again the direct question in the quick, challenging voice.

"Tall. He was very tall. And his eyes were deeper in his head than an Indian's usually are. And there was something else which I noticed and have forgotten. . . ." He paused, frowning, as if trying to recollect. . . . "Ah! now I remember! It was a scar across his face."

Thunder Boy's eyes lightened.

"Then his message was a lie!"

The words were uttered with such a tone of conviction that the man was startled. For the first time in the conversation, he began to wonder whether there were not more truth, after all, in the boy's incredible tale, than he had at first supposed. He started to question

him closely ; and as the tale unfolded itself more and more, the conviction drove itself in upon him that what the boy said was true. And while this belief grew stronger, things which had long seemed dead, began to stir within him, and to work a strange trouble in his brain. For ten years now, he had lived with the tribe, first as a prisoner, and then, after receiving the news of the death of his wife and child, of his own free will. The Indian's ways and customs, his speech, his habits—even his thoughts—he had adopted by slow degrees until, unconsciously to himself, he had become almost more Indian than White Man, and had cast off the White Man's civilization as utterly as the serpent sheds his skin. Yet now, suddenly, without any warning, a child to all outward appearances more Indian than himself, appeared suddenly before him out of the East he had abandoned, and awoke to renewed life old associations which he had believed lay buried deeply under the dead mould of the years.

After a time, he ceased questioning, and listened to the boy as if in a dream. His dead wife, Katoya, Seven Brothers, Scar-face, Running Wolf, Manoo—even his own brother, whose portrait as he remembered him, was unpleasant enough to be true : all these were like the names in a legend of Indian lore told during the long winter nights in the shelter of the tepees.

But dream though it seemed, and wild as the clanging Indian names rang in the telling, Thunder Boy was no dream, but as real a piece of flesh and blood as you could meet with, east or west.

And when all was over, and there was little left to tell, he made it perfectly clear that he had not come on a dream-mission, and that what he wanted to be put

into instant action was anything but a dream. In a word, he demanded that the rescue of Katoya should be undertaken without an instant's delay.

But there came the rub. His father did not think that anything could be done. The Snakes were said to be assembled in great force. He was doubtful if the Moosebills would consider themselves sufficiently strong to launch an attack. Even his influence, considerable though it was, might not be powerful enough to induce the Moosebills to risk taking the war-path, merely for the purpose of rescuing an ancient medicine-woman belonging to another tribe, and whom, moreover, they had never seen.

Thunder Boy listened to these objections with a fiery impatience which even his Indian upbringing was not able to control. Katoya a prisoner! Katoya in danger of her life at the hands of her relentless enemy! Katoya who, in her own person, included everything wonderful which he had ever known—to be treated as if she was anybody's grandmother, instead of being—as he believed—great enough to be grandmother to the Thunder Bird himself!—it was an unthinkable indignity; an outrage not to be borne.

He drew himself up till he was as stiff and straight as a young larch tree, and looked his father full in the eyes.

“I came to find a pale-face father, who was a strong brave, and a medicine-man who could do great things. But if he will not lead his people to rescue Katoya, I shall know that my father's heart died many moons ago in the Indian lodges, and that I have only found his body which is waiting to be dead!”

The man gave the boy a sudden, searching look. His

utter amazement struck him dumb. What was it which made the boy's speech penetrate so deeply into his consciousness that he seemed suddenly to awake? The words stung him, so that he winced under the fine lash of their contempt. What sudden power was it which had taught this mere boy the secret of a man's anger, and a man's ringing scorn? Who *was* this creature, who stood defiantly before him in all the pride of a young savage, with the glitter of strange fires in his eyes, and the echoes of forgotten things in his voice? . . . And suddenly, as if his spirit had come to him again after a long journey, he shook the Indian lethargy of the moons from him; gave another searching look deep into his son's eyes; and *saw*!

And with this sudden awakening, the man that he had once been was born anew, and he saw the world again with his white man's vision.

"Come," he said. "We will speak with the Chief. We will tell him what we wish to do."

Thunder Boy's blood glowed. If this White Man acted with the same vigour as he spoke, then he was his father indeed! He followed him without another word to the Chief's tepee.

Akitopa, the chief, was a man with a face built up grandly on the ancient Indian lines, as if the great mountain ranges of his country had entered into its construction. And his mind was as nobly rugged as his face. Petty ways, or mean emotions, did not enter into his composition. But he had seen too much of the world both red and white to be easily deceived.

While he listened to what his White Medicine Man had to say, his eyes never ceased to penetrate Thunder Boy with their piercing gaze. And although the boy

looked principally at his father when he spoke, whenever he turned to the Chief he met his look with one that did not flinch.

When the White Man had finished, Akitopa asked some questions which Thunder Boy answered with the same tone of independence as that in which he had spoken to his father. The Chief marked the tone as much as the words, and was impressed. In fact, he was so deeply impressed, that he at once summoned a meeting of braves, in order to lay the matter before them, before deciding what action should be taken.

After his father had spoken, Thunder Boy was subjected to a rigorous examination, both by Akitopa and by his braves. His whole history, as he had already related it to his father, had to be retold. That part of it which dealt with Scar-face and his treachery aroused special interest, and it soon became clear to Thunder Boy that they were not at all disposed to form themselves into a war party for the release of Katoya. Akitopa himself, after the examination was concluded, and when the pow-wow resulting from it was in full swing, left the discussion largely to his braves. Whatever his personal opinion might be, he kept it to himself, as if he did not wish to influence his people one way or the other. Even when the boy's father had spoken again, urging the rescue strongly, and using all his power of persuasion with those who had adopted him as a member of their tribe, the braves remained obstinately opposed to the plan. Thunder Boy's heart sank within him. If even his father's influence, great though it was, failed to move the braves, and if Akitopa, who had at least shown himself to be sufficiently impressed to have called the meeting together, stood aloof, his last

hope of rescuing his grandmother was dashed to the ground. He looked despairingly at his father ; at the Chief ; then at all the hard Indian faces gathered in an unfriendly circle about him, like those of unpitied judges who had already pronounced his doom. Nowhere was there the least sign of encouragement. Even his father's expression was that of one who has ceased to hope.

No one would help him. There was nothing left but Manoo. Yet there *was* one person ; one who had seen his grandmother in those last terrible moments in the tepee, when she had sat helplessly bound, and, at Manoo's warning, had never abated a jot of her splendid courage, but had urged him to save himself, by instant flight, and leave her to her fate.

That person was himself !

And as himself, standing there alone—a boy against a hundred grown-up men—he faced them undaunted, filled with a sudden passion that swept him like a wind.

“ Cowards ! ” he called in a loud tone. “ You are cowards—*all* of you ! ” And as he repeated the words, his voice rose in a ringing cry.

One and all, the braves stared at him in amazement. It was a new experience for them to be taunted by a boy. Yet that was only a beginning of the astounding things which Thunder Boy found to say. They had never heard such language, delivered in such a torrent of passion ; nor, for that matter, had Thunder Boy himself. Where the words came from he did not know. They leaped to his tongue like flocks of birds which rose suddenly from nowhere, and darkened the air with a storm of wings. He hardly knew what he said. He certainly did not care. He was past caring now. His

passion lifted him to a height of scornful eloquence which would have astonished himself, if he had had time to be astonished. But there was no time. There was no distinction. Age, rank, experience, were swept aside, annihilated. There was nothing but his heart, white-hot with passion, flaming out into burning words that fell upon his amazed audience like flakes of fire. And where the fire fell, it kindled. At first the braves had resented such an explosion, which they regarded as a piece of daring unheard of in its impudence. But as Thunder Boy continued passing from scornful anger to passionate pleading, and they realized that, if the words burnt like fire, the emotion behind them was the very life-blood of his heart, their resentment melted away as snow beneath the sun. And when, in conclusion, his voice rose throbbing into the cry: "Katoya told me that the Moosebills were the greatest tribe in the West. Will the Moosebills show their greatness now? Or will they change their name to 'Moosecalves' and offer their scalp-locks to the Snakes?"—such a wave of enthusiasm swept over them, that the entire company, with loud cries of admiration, rose to their feet as one man.

The next moment he was caught in the White Man's arms, and heard him, in a clear voice which every one could hear, call out triumphantly: "If this boy's mother was my wife or not, I claim him as my Indian son!"

Thunder Boy found himself sobbing against his father's heart.

CHAPTER XXVII

SCAR-FACE MEETS HIS DOOM

WHEN Thunder Boy and Manoo had fled away into the night, leaving her half unbound, Katoya had remained seated exactly as she had been left. Even when she had been rebound, so that the thongs seemed to burn into her flesh, and a guard set over her to prevent any possible efforts to renew the attempt to rescue her, she neither winced nor uttered a word. And the grim smile which hung about her mouth as remote sounds of Manoo's fight with the huskies, drifting into camp, told her what was happening, was the only sign of interest which she manifested in the affair. And as the days went on, and she heard no news either of her grandson's capture or of his escape, she seemed to know, by some strange inner knowledge, independent of her outward senses, that his enemies had failed to catch him, and that he was safe.

But of Manoo she had tidings, which came from no secret knowledge, but from the fact that, although the tepee hampered her vision, it did not dull her ears. For some time after the hubbub of the huskies had subsided, she heard nothing more of him. But long after dawn broke, a howl or whimper of some wounded husky limping back to the camp told plainly of his work, and warmed Katoya's heart. But the following night, a

long and terrible cry was heard echoing down a lonely canyon to the north, and was repeated at intervals till morning, setting the nerves of the huskies on edge, and making them ill at ease all night. And late the next evening, Katoya heard a scratching and loud sniffing at the bottom of the tepee, and knew that she was not deserted.

The days went by. Scar-face returned to camp in a worse temper, if possible, than when he had started on his futile chase. Katoya bore the abominable treatment she received with a stoical indifference which goaded him to fury. And now, all the camp knew—herself included—that, if he continued to spare her life, it was only that he might glut his vengeance by holding in reserve for her the most terrible torture which his evil brain could devise.

It was getting late in the season, and the nights were colder. Katoya, sitting in the chilly tepee, heard the cries she had known for countless winters which told that the waste places of the North were giving up their feathered populations and that the great southward movement had begun. And the maple turned to gold, and the shumac on the buttes to flame, and the Fall arrayed itself in the gorgeous garments that are the death-robcs of the year. But neither movement nor colour lifted the heavy stillness of the shadowy tepee where Katoya, gathered into herself, awaited the coming of that day when she too, like the dying year, would wear a robe of flame.

Scar-face had determined that her death should take place at the same time as the Snakes celebrated their great festival of the Wolf Dance. By this arrangement he was able to satisfy his own desire for a complete

and terrible revenge, and at the same time provide an exciting spectacle for the tribe which would add greatly to the impressiveness of the festival itself. And to this latter end, he lost no opportunity of making them realize the immense benefit they would derive from the destruction of the great Medicine Woman, whose medicine, so constantly used in the service of their worst enemies, had brought misfortune upon them many times. She herself once destroyed, and her grandson captured, the medicine-power she had given to him could then be used for their own benefit against the very enemies to whom it had once belonged. But to achieve this splendid victory, one thing was still needful, if it were to be complete.

For the unfortunate thing about Katoya's power was that it was not only a two-footed medicine which you could imprison in a tepee, and afterwards destroy with fire. A portion of it—and that a very alarming one—was a wandering medicine that ran upon four feet, and cried with a fearful cry. And until the four feet ceased to wander, and the threatening voice to cry, the camp would never be free from the visitings of evil in the nights.

For now the camp was visited nightly, and the whole region haunted by a terrible shadow which, even when the huskies winded it, and filled the camp with a furious clamour, they never dared to attack. Sometimes, when the braves sat round the camp-fires at the door of the tepees, the shape would flit through the outermost circle of the firelight and disappear again in the gloom. And at others it would not be seen so much as heard, a high wild voice that shrilled along the hollows, and had its lair in the black gullies to the north, shunned by the

boldest brave even in summer, and down which the blizzard roared in winter like a blast from a bull-moose's throat. Even in daylight, glimpses were sometimes caught by outgoing or returning hunters of a long-bodied beast which showed itself for a moment at the edge of some impenetrable thicket, and was gone.

Soon the whole camp was in a state of uneasiness, and vague alarm, especially as all efforts to kill, or frighten the creature off, were useless ; and those who were bold enough to follow the trail of the great panther, which had left unmistakable signs of itself all about the locality, always lost it in the depths of the northern gullies, which the Indians believed to be haunted by evil spirits.

At length the day came on which the Wolf-festival was to be celebrated, and Katoya was to meet her doom. At earliest dawn the camp was astir, and there was much going to and fro among the tepees. Those who were to take a principal part in it, were busy painting their faces in the traditional patterns, and adorning themselves in their war-bonnets and beads. Scar-face himself was especially resplendent in his decorations, as he had given himself out to be a notable chief and medicine-man from the east, about to manifest publicly his great power in the punishment of a victim in the person of an ancient squaw who had been his enemy for years.

The victim herself remained, as she had done ever since her capture, apparently unmoved by anything which happened either within or without the tepee. Even the stir and commotion of this, the last day of existence, did not produce in her any visible change.

To all outward appearances, she was the same gaunt figure of an ancient woman with a skin like shrivelled leather, crouched always at the back of the tepee without sound or movement—almost, as it seemed, without breath.

And as she sat, a huddled heap which neither spoke nor stirred, it appeared as if Death were already so close upon her, that it would be merely a mockery to take out her body to be burned.

They came for her a little before noon. Her bonds had already been taken off earlier in the day, so that although her ankles were swollen and painful, she could walk. As she came out from the dark interior of the tepee, into the full blaze of the sun, she stood for a moment or two dazzled by the glare. Then some one tugged the thong which was fastened to one of her wrists, and she was led through the centre of the camp to the place of her execution. When she had reached it, the dimness passed from her vision and she saw her surroundings clearly.

There was a great concourse of people, even greater than she had expected. The Chiefs in their robes of state, each with a tall head-dress of eagle-feathers, tipped with horsehair ; the braves in full war-paint ; the medicine-men with their fateful drums ; the medicine-women in their sacred blankets and official decorations, more eager even than the men to watch the final doom of this terrible sister of theirs, secretly hated for her power as much as openly feared.

Would her famous medicine save her now ? Its two-footed body was about to be destroyed. Would its four-footed come to her rescue before it was too late ?

Even as they asked the question, the "medicine," unseen of any, was in motion, drawing steadily closer in.

Was she aware of it? Did *she* see the hidden thing that came nearer and nearer on furtive feet, and never gave a sign? Past the gold of the maples, past the shumac's scarlet flame, past shadowy places where the grey tree-lichen hung like hanks of ghostly hair; the "medicine" moved onward; and not the lightest fold of the summer's death-robe rustled as it came.

And now the drums began to beat, as the principal performers prepared themselves for the first movement in the opening ceremony with which the festival began.

Katoya's feet and hands were once more bound and she was tied to the stump of a young pitch-pine, the upper branches of which had been cut off, and which were now piled thickly about the lower part of her body as far as her waist to form the funeral pyre. And all the time, Scar-face, in all his pomp of paint and feathers, stood triumphantly beside her, relentless in his vengeance to the last.

Yet not once did she look at him, nor appear in the smallest degree conscious of his presence. Bound, helpless; about to be sacrificed with the utmost cruelty, her spirit was unbroken, and her eyes, gazing calmly out into the distance, touched invisible horizons beyond the reach of Death.

Louder beat the drums, and more excited became the crowd; for now the Wolf Dance was beginning, during the performance of which the fire would be lighted, and the squaw's slow agony begun. It was one of the oldest of the Indian dances. It went back to an antiquity beyond the oldest totem-pole, when the Red

Man's feet first moved to a measure which he had caught from the wolves themselves ; and when his own body had bent to the wolf-rhythm by second nature, in a world where the men were wolfish, and the wolves were almost men.

Round the pine-tree, as a centre, circle beyond circle, the dancers moved ; slowly at first, then more quickly, with low crouchings of the body and sudden, swift leaps sideways, to imitate the wolves. To make the dance more suggestive many of the performers wore wolf-skins, complete with heads and ears, fastened in such a way that in many cases the dancer's face was entirely hidden, and his own eyes looked out through the eye-holes of the skin.

As the dance quickened, to the quickening of the drums, the first slow chanting of the wolf-song was broken by howls and barking cries. And as the cries rose high above the chanting, and the throbbing of the drums, the excitement of the dance gained upon the spectators so that their bodies began to sway in unison, and here and there one would throw back his head, and the wolf-cry would leap from his throat. It only needed the fire to be kindled round Katoya for the dance to become a frenzied movement which would sweep the entire throng.

Yet, while the figures circled about her with wilder and wilder gestures, and the air rang with wolfish cries, as at the mustering of a pack, Katoya, with the same immovable calm upon her face, gazed steadily into the distance to things beyond the dance.

It is coming ! It is almost here. The maple yellows to a deeper gold. The shumac's scarlet flame burns to a hue like blood. From the black gullies to the North,

from the water-ways of the South ; from the sombre spruce woods East and West ; the " Medicine " is advancing, is swiftly closing in. The Medicine has four feet ; the Medicine has fifty ; the Medicine has a hundred ; the Medicine has so many that they are not to be counted by eyes drunken with a wolf-dance whose earliest measures beat out their rhythm down the trails of forgotten Time.

And now the moment had arrived when the fire was to be lighted and the dance would reach its height. Scar-face, with a brand which he had taken from a fire left burning in the camp, had already stepped to the pine tree with a gleam of triumph on his face.

But what cries were those which rang high and shrill, making themselves heard even above the hubbub of the dance ? Scar-face stopped, just as he was stooping forward, and the gleam died out of his eyes. The whole dance paused also, as if suddenly frozen into stillness ; and all eyes were turned to the forest.

The forest seemed alive. From behind every tree, an Indian leaped, fully armed, and once more the air was rent with war-cries.

The Medicine had arrived.

As with one accord, the Snakes turned to flee into the camp and snatch up their arms which they had left in the tepees. Those who were in time to do so, found that the camp itself was surrounded and that further escape was cut off.

Scar-face dropped his brand, but did not run. He had seen something more than the advancing enemy. Directly his eyes had turned to the forest he had caught sight of a figure that was certainly not a Red Man's, despite its Indian trappings ; and, beside it, Thunder Boy !

In an instant he realized that once again the boy was about to foil him. He showed his teeth in such a grin of fury that it seemed as if the old scar must re-open. There would be no burning now ! But there would be something else. He would not be baulked of his revenge, even if it had to take a swifter and more merciful form. He drew his tomahawk and leaped upon the squaw. And as he leaped, a thin-flanked thunderbolt dashed him to the ground.

Strike now, Scar-face ! Strike blindly under that screeching mass of tawny fur ! Strike, with the last breath of your body, and the last ounce of your strength ! For a strength greater than yours is upon you, and a vengeance as pitiless as yours is at your throat ; and the four-footed Medicine, whose lair was in the black gully to the north, enfolds you in the whirlwind of its wrath !

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When Thunder Boy and his father rushed forward to save Katoya, Manoo had done his work. Nevermore behind the scarred visage would the dark spirit haunting the Indian world as Scar-face, mature its evil plots of treachery and revenge. Nevermore would his stealthy tread scare the little wood inhabitants with shining eyes that watch beside the trails. He lived long enough to see them cut Katoya's bonds away, and to realize that his ancient enemy had ceased to be his victim ; and then Death, more merciful than he himself in life had ever been, put an end to his sufferings, and his dark soul fled down the haunted ways to vex the sunlight nevermore.

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A moon later, the settlement was startled by the sudden appearance one morning of a strangely assorted group which advanced slowly into its midst. The old squaw some of the settlers remembered to have seen before. But the two years since he had left them, had worked such a change in Thunder Boy, that the tall youth who moved before them with such independence, carrying his name, bore so little likeness to the terrified boy who had fled away one night down the river and been swallowed up in the West, that they failed to recognize him. The tall man beside him, dressed in Indian garments, and bronzed to a hue little lighter than theirs, also passed unrecognized. As for the great panther, hanging on the skirts of the party with a wary look, him they instantly marked as a threatening danger to be hounded back into the forest as soon as opportunity should arise.

But there was one among their number upon whom the sight of the group flashed with a terrible recognition. Kennedy had slept later than usual that morning, and had only just got up. This heavy sleep after a bout of drinking the night before, had not refreshed him. What he saw when he opened his cabin door, intending to go to the river to draw water, affected him like a nightmare. Was he still dreaming? . . . Could it be horribly true? He drew back into the cabin, hoping he had not been seen. So might a deer hope, when, emerging from its covert under the fir-tree, it found itself suddenly face to face with Manoo.

A loud knocking at the door. Kennedy, at the farthest side of the cabin behind the stove, answered it involuntarily with another sort of knocking under his ribs. Perhaps, if he did not stir, they would go away !

Equally possible, if the deer did not move, that Manoo would not spring! Again the knocking—louder than before. Trembling all over, in spite of his intense effort to control himself, Kennedy crossed the cabin unsteadily and opened the door. One look into the terrible eyes of the powerful Indian-looking man confronting him, and the recognition was mutual.

His brother returned from the dead!—Worse than that, bringing his son with him! And, to complete the disaster, Katoya, the evil spirit of the whole, also returned, with the truth, deadly as murder, behind her withered lips!

For a moment or two no one spoke. Kennedy's eyes wandered shiftily from one face to another. Then he cleared his throat, and, with an attempt to recover his ordinary bullying manner, asked gruffly what they wanted.

His brother did not deign to answer the question. Instead, he answered the *man*. He spoke in a hard, biting tone, and, though he spoke quickly, he never threw a word away. In a few rapid sentences, he exposed the whole of Kennedy's infamy before him, throwing his life, like the treacherous lie it was, into his teeth.

When he had done, Kennedy stood dumbstruck with fear and fury, very pale about the lips.

"I didn't know!" he stammered. "I didn't . . ."

But the sudden look in his brother's face silenced him and the lie stuck in his throat.

He saw his brother turn from him with a gesture of unutterable scorn, and then watched the group as it continued on its way.

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The news that Thunder Boy and his father had returned ran through the settlement like fire. Those who had shown no particular kindness to the son, and had been willing enough to accept the report of the father's death, came forward now with much bravery of tongue-wagging and manifestations of regard. For the rest, those who had doubted the death, and had sincerely regretted the disappearance, of the one, and the few who had showed any genuine pity for the other, when at his uncle's tender mercies, made a less showy display of congratulations. But Thunder Boy had a memory long and keen, of which two years of wilderness adventure had not dulled the edge. And his father, knowing how little effort had ever been put forth to trace his whereabouts, or test the truth of the persistent rumours of his death, did not allow himself to be entirely hoodwinked by the expression of general satisfaction. For all that, there was no denying the fact that both he and Thunder Boy were the heroes of the hour.

Even Katoya came in for a share of the popular approval.

But Katoya also had a long memory. And there were things in it which made the White Man's praise or blame alike indifferent to her. So she observed the settlers suspiciously with her deep forest eye, and made no response to their advances. As for Manoo, he held himself completely aloof, and as soon as he was satisfied that neither Katoya nor Thunder Boy appeared to be in danger of attack, he slunk off into the forest and kept a wary watch on the proceedings from afar.

Now as a sudden explosion of popularity in favour of some one person violently admired, generally means

that some other person must be as violently detested, in order to keep the balance of human nature beautifully poised—a wave of popular indignation began to flow in the direction of Kennedy, the uncle, which threatened to become a tidal one, and to carry him out of his depth.

So a remarkably short time elapsed before a crowd of indignant settlers waited—or rather did *not* wait—upon him ; but bore down upon his cabin, vowing vengeance on his head.

But Kennedy, who had guessed too clearly the course which public feeling would be likely to take, when his dastardly proceedings should be fully known, having observed the visitation gathering on the horizon, like the aforesaid wave, did not wait for it to wait upon him, but, hurriedly catching up his rifle and a few other necessities, passed stealthily, and for ever, into the shadow of the trees.

CHAPTER XXVIII

WHAT LITTLE BROTHER SAW

IT was spring again, and once more Little Brother, the Cut-bank coyote, sat out to feel the sun. It had been a severe winter, and in spite of all his artful cunning, game had been hard to get. "God's Dog" had found it no easy matter to keep the meaty parts of him from wearing thin along his bones. But as a meagre body and a stout heart often go together, Little Brother's courage, like his voice, defied the season, and was as undaunted as ever when the thaw set in. His voice, indeed, was in a truly prime condition, and had matured to such a quality in its upper register that it sent shivers down the spine of every listening cotton-tail within earshot far and near.

Little Brother liked to feel the sun, and to observe how the landscape, from having been a snow-packed whiteness for more than a third of the year, had turned, as if by magic, into a glowing panorama in every possible shade of green. He saw the forests far out to the West. He saw the rolling ridges that melted at last into the prairies to the East. In a word, he saw endless waves of wilderness after wilderness lift their crests in all the riot of the spring.

He also observed what made him suddenly stiffen every muscle to attention. He saw a tall shape on two legs that walked as Indians walk, followed

by a long shape on four, that went as panthers go.

Since Thunder Boy's departure, and the dispersal of the tribe, Indians in that neighbourhood had been few and far between, which suited Little Brother admirably when it came to catching game.

He scrutinized the new-comers narrowly with his black and shining eyes, lowering himself flat upon his stomach, so as to be merely a slight wart on the landscape, if they should look his way ; and when at length they vanished among the manzanita thickets at the foot of the bluff, he gathered his loose limbs under him and loped softly down the hill.

To Katoya, as to all other things quickened by rising sap, or running blood, the spring had come. Exactly what dim uneasiness it brought to her ancient bones, none but herself could say. Yet something stirred. Down there, in dark Indian depths, beyond the reach of pale-face vision, the waters were troubled, and her soul received a call.

She had borne the settlement all winter ; and—which was not an unimportant matter—the Settlement had borne *her*. It was quite willing to accept Thunder Boy, as the son of his father, despite his red-skin taint ; but when it came to adopting a grandmother whose ancestors had committed the crime of being redskins for untold generations, it was strongly felt that pale-face hospitality was stretched to breaking point, and might at any moment snap. Katoya, with her finely developed sense of feeling people's minds, did not wait for the moment ; but, one morning very early, without saying good-bye to anyone—the second Indian squaw in the history of the settlement to steal

away from it while it still slumbered—packed up her few belongings and departed in the dawn.

There were two points of similarity between the departure of this second woman and that of the first. One was the bundle which, in each instance, was carried on the back. But whereas the first bundle had been heavy, and had required a good deal of attention, the second asked for no attention at all, and was comparatively light.

And although the bearer of the first bundle had long since laid down all earthly burdens, and gone to her rest, its contents, now visibly enlarged, lay, at the moment of Katoya's departure, in untroubled sleep in the very cabin where, so many years before, in a sugar-box lined with opossum-skin, they had gurgled at the stove.

The second point of likeness was so close as to be startling.

Katoya had not gone very far upon her way when she was conscious of being shadowed by an animal which kept in among the trees. And when, after playing this shadow-game for a considerable time, a large panther bounded to her side, she was not at all surprised to recognize Manoo.

Manoo, unlike his mistress, had not borne the settlement at all, though he had continued to haunt the neighbourhood when not engaged in distant hunting. So, when the spring impulse drove the geese North and Katoya to the woods, he was delighted to bear her company once more wherever she might go. And thus it came to pass that when she again sought the ancient camping-ground of her tribe, and lit her camp-fire by the shores of the Susquehah, she had companions in

the deserted spot, though one was only a coyote who remained discreetly out of sight.

Again Little Brother found himself sitting in the sun ; and again he admired the rolling world in the expansion of the day ; and again he saw a walking thing that went on two hind legs. Instantly, he ceased to be a coyote sitting on its tail, and became a wart upon the landscape as before. Only this time, it did not seem as if the cunning trick would work because the two-legged Indian thing was advancing straight towards him up the hill. But he let the stranger come a little nearer yet before moving. There was no need to become agitated when he was only two good leaps away from the third door of his den. The Indian came on quickly, as if the ground was familiar ; and the wart that was Little Brother flattened back its ears. Then, just when it had decided that the time to leap had come, a little puff of wandering air came wafting up the hill.

It was a sun-warmed little puff, and carried with it airy particles of pungent forest scents. But the part of it that sent a thrill up Little Brother's nose, drowned all the other odours with a purely Indian tang. Immediately Little Brother elevated himself into a coyote again, and because he couldn't relieve his mind by simply doing that, he threw his jowl ecstatically sunwards, and became a bark, a howl, a sneeze, and an explosion, in a sequence of discords which has no tonic name.

When Thunder Boy heard the crescendo of the final ringing squall, and knew that he was recognized by his old teacher and friend, he broke into a run. And so, when he arrived, he hadn't enough breath left to say politely :

"How are you?"

However, that wasn't necessary, because it was obvious that Little Brother was in the very best of health, and was fully prepared, at a moment's notice, to split the very heavens in another deafening squall. But as Thunder Boy had something more important to find out than any startling possibilities of Little Brother's voice, he lost no time in shooting a question right into him in the old unspoken way. And for answer, Little Brother snuffled hard south-east-by-south. Which, as Thunder Boy rightly interpreted it, meant to say that if you wanted to find the camp of any person you might then be looking for, it would be found in the quarter directly opposite to Little Brother's nose.

"Been a long way since I saw you last," Thunder Boy remarked.

What Little Brother ought to have replied to that, was :

"Travel enlarges the mind and develops the muscles."

What he really said wordlessly was :

"Any fool can walk."

However, as he said it quite politely, with a truly coyote grin, Thunder Boy wasn't offended in the least.

"Been doing much hunting?" he asked next.

Little Brother swept the landscape with a comprehensive sort of leer, as much as to indicate that there weren't many yards of *that* territory which he hadn't explored.

"Much more game out west where *I've* been!" Thunder Boy said. "You ought to change your range."

Little Brother's grin deepened from a slit to a cavity where things could get mislaid, but he made no other sort of reply.

"I've learnt a lot of things lately," Thunder Boy went on. "But I haven't forgotten what *you* taught me," he added quickly, in case Little Brother might feel hurt.

"Found some one else to teach you, did you?" Little Brother asked innocently.

He asked it *so* innocently that Thunder Boy felt a trifle uncomfortable. Surely it wasn't possible that the coyote suspected anything about Manoo?

"There wasn't any other coyote to teach me," he said rather lamely.

"Oh, not another coyote, wasn't there?" Little Brother echoed, still keeping up the grin. And then his eyes wandered off along the vacancies over the spruce-tops in the sun.

All at once his expression changed, as if he had caught sight of something out of the common.

His eyes had such an angry glint in them that Thunder Boy turned quickly to see what was the matter. And there was Manoo coming quickly up the hill.

He came so quickly that there was no time to think what was best to be done. It was very embarrassing, not to say alarming; for Thunder Boy had never considered what might happen if his two friends should ever meet.

He glanced nervously at Little Brother. No grin now! The cavity had changed to a murderous gully, exposing a lair of vicious-looking teeth. Ears laid back; hair bristling;—the coyote hardly looked like a hospitable host about to entertain visitors at his own front door!

As for Manoo—rather, as for flaming Jealousy and Rage in the shape of Manoo—Thunder Boy was far too

familiar with all his various moods not to recognize the threatening battle-curves of his tawny body as it came sweeping up the hill.

For a moment or two it really looked as if Little Brother, in spite of his far inferior size and strength, had decided to stand his ground. If so, a nearer view of that tawny Terror surging up from the spruce woods below him, speedily brought his better judgment into play. So when, with one of his tremendous bounds, the panther hurled himself snarling through space, he landed on a piece of rock which didn't strike at all chilly to his feet, because, for the last half-hour, Little Brother had been warming it with his tail. And when, in baffled fury, Manoo was about to leap again, that tail, with the rest of Little Brother hustled hard in front of it, vanished like a streak of bushy lightning through the nearest door of the den !

When Katoya saw her grandson unexpectedly arriving, accompanied by a ruffled and sulky Manoo, it was all she could do to keep the joy she felt from leaking through the openings in the leathery mask of her face. And when after they had talked for some time she discovered that, unless she consented to return with him to the settlement, he was fully determined to make his home with her as before, she felt as if the carrying out of her purpose in leaving him would break her heart.

" But do you not love your white father ? " she asked him, after he had vehemently repeated his determination not to leave her any more.

" Yes, but he is a new father," he answered stubbornly. " And you have been my grandmother much,

much longer than he is old " : which, although worded a little curiously, carried its meaning clearly into Katoya's mind.

Her native skill in argument did not fail her now. Knowing her grandson as she did, she realized that if she showed the least sign of wavering, she could never induce him to return.

" The longer you live with him, the less new he will be," she said gently. " He is a good father, and will take care of you when old Katoya has gone along the Wolf-trail."

" Not the Wolf-trail yet ! " Thunder Boy said, gazing at her earnestly ; for he knew that she was alluding to the day when she should die.

" No, no ; not yet ! " she said quickly, to reassure him. " I shall follow many trails before that."

" But why must you follow them ? " he asked. " Why will you not stay with me among the pale-faces now that my white father has come again to his home ? "

" Because the pale-faces are not my people," Katoya answered firmly. " I shall go to find my people down there in the South."

" Then I shall go with you," Thunder Boy said with equal firmness. " You shall not go alone."

Katoya did not argue with him any more. But later in the evening, as they sat by the fire before lying down to sleep, she resumed the conversation, as if it had never been interrupted.

" I shall not travel alone," she said in a low voice. " The Great Spirit walks also with those who take the trail."

For Thunder Boy, the words referred to the journey into the South. But as she spoke, Katoya's eyes were

fixed upon the Wolf-trail where it gleamed between the stars.

Next morning Thunder Boy rose early, but found as usual that Katoya was up before him and had already lit the fire. His spirits were very high, and he wanted to sing and run races with Manoo. For now that he and his grandmother were together once more, he thought that the old happy wilderness life would repeat itself. But when, after he had eaten his breakfast, he asked her merrily if they were going to start southwards that day, she merely shook her head wearily, and went on sitting silently by the fire. So Thunder Boy raced off, along the river-bank, singing an Indian hunting-song, and calling to Manoo.

When he had gone some distance, he turned and saw his grandmother still sitting motionless in the sun. And suddenly something seemed to call him back to her. But the river glanced, and the sun shone dazzling down, and the Spring was in his heart. And he was so tremendously alive and buoyant, that his feet began to dance as he sang.

Katoya saw the lithe, whirling figure in the sunny distance by the river and caught snatches of the song. And then river and song and dancing melted away from her, and her eyes were fixed in trance.

Just before noon, Thunder Boy, with Manoo at his heels, came racing into camp.

"Grandmother! Grandmother!" he cried excitedly. "My white father is coming! He will be here directly! He has found the trail!"

Katoya made no sign. And though he came close

up to her, and repeated the words loudly, her eyes remained fixed before her, and her body never stirred. She, too, had found the trail.

Deep below all earthly trance, or mortal dream of waking, the Spring had indeed entered into her and called her far away.

Beyond all wandering voices ; beyond all journeying feet ; farther than the wild geese, or the heron's labouring wing, Katoya had gone upon her last journey ; the star-way, the wolf-way. And her words to Thunder Boy the night before had been no mockery ; for a Spirit walked beside her along the shining trail. —

BAKER, (O.)
Thunder Boy

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